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PLUCK AND LUCK

**MOLLY, THE MOONLIGHTER,
OR, OUT ON THE HILLS OF IRELAND**

By ALLAN ARNOLD



When Dick Graves reached the turn, a loud voice cried out: "Halt, on your lives!" The voice came from a ledge of rocks on the side of the narrow path, while over a dozen rifles were aimed at the party.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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OR,

OUT ON THE HILLS OF IRELAND

By ALLAN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.

THE CHASE FOR THE GRAY MARE.

Early one night in summer—and a glorious moonlight night it was—a ragged lad was standing at the door of a tavern situated on the highroad leading into the old town of Bandon.

The said Irish town is built on a beautiful river of the same name, and is about seven miles from the southern coast.

The ragged lad had a merry twinkle in his blue eyes, and he was humming a gay Irish tune in a melodious voice as he stood outside the tavern, with the careless air of a do-nothing who had not a trouble in life.

Suddenly, however, his attention became attracted by a sound that caused him to exclaim:

"Who in the mischief rides helter-skelter this way? One would suppose it was a jockey dashing in at the winning-post."

The words were scarcely uttered when the rider drew up before the tavern, crying:

"Hello! there, lad, do you belong to the tavern?"

The lad stepped out, staring at horse and rider, as he replied:

"I do and I don't, sir, as I am not quite engaged yet."

"Then I'll engage you. Give my horse a drink at once."

The young man sprang from the saddle, while the lad hastened away for the water, muttering:

"Faith, but he's a handsome young buck, and what a fine racer he's got! Wouldn't I like to caper on her to the hills to-night!"

While the young rider stood beside the splendid gray mare he kept listening in the most eager manner, as if expecting pursuers along the road.

It was easy to perceive that he had ridden hard and fast, as the mare was covered with foam, while the rider himself was trembling as if from agitation or exertion.

The lad was soon back with the bucket, as he cried:

"I put a little meal and bran in it, sir, as the good mare looks a little the worse for the journey."

"That's right, my lad," said the horseman, hurriedly. "Can you ride?"

"Like fury, sir."

"Do you know the country hereabouts very well, my lad?"

"That I do, sir."

"Do you know where Coolmain is?"

"To be sure, sir. I could go there this minute blindfolded."

"Do you know Mr. Turner's place out there?"

"To be sure, sir—the old skin—I mean gentleman, sir."

"I don't care whether he's an old skinflint or not," said the young rider, with a bright smile, "if you will take this mare out to him."

The ragged lad dropped the bucket and sprang on the saddle at once, as he eagerly replied:

"I wouldn't desire better sport than that to-night, sir."

And the eager jockey was about to start with the animal, when the young man seized the bridle, saying:

"Hold on until I give you a few instructions and some money. Can I trust you?"

"With the mare, sir, forever, but not with the money."

The young man burst out laughing as he looked up at the droll face of the impatient lad, while he kept his ear bent for sounds of pursuit along the road, as he said:

"You are a sly rogue, but I will trust you with the mare, as I cannot ride another mile."

"Then let me start away, sir, as she should be kept a little warm after the cold water. Oh, isn't she a fine darling!"

And the lad patted the animal on the neck in the most affectionate way.

"Have a little patience and I'll let you off," said the young man, as he led the mare to and fro. "Mind you, you must not ride through the town."

"Very good, sir; then I'll take the hill road to the south for it."

"That is just the thing. Here's a pound for your trouble."

"It is too much, sir, as it is no trouble at all."

"I'll give you ten more to-morrow if you get the mare safe out into old Mr. Turner's stable."

"What is to hinder me, sir?"

"Several things. In the first place, you will be pursued."

"What of that, sir. Sure, the darling here ought to be able to give leg bail to the best of them."

"So she is, but she is a little beat out, and I think you'll have good horses after you."

The ragged lad winked at the young man as he said:

"Trust me to make the best of what's in the purty creature."

"I think you will. But there is danger of your being stopped on the way."

"Who will stop me, sir?"

"Some of the lads that travel at moonlight, I fear."

The droll lad looked earnestly down at the young man as he asked:

"Why should you dread the lads?"

"I don't dread them for myself, but on account of the mare."

"Why on account of the mare, sir? Tell me the truth, and it may be all the better for the mare."

The young man hesitated to reply, but when he looked into the honest, earnest face of the lad, he at once replied:

"I will tell you the truth. First, what is your name?"

"Miles Griffen, sir."

"Well, Miles, I have just stolen the fine mare."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, it is the truth. But still she belongs to me by right. I haven't time to explain the affair now, and I suppose you don't know much about law."

"Nor I don't care much for the law either, sir, bad luck to it. But why take her to ould Turner, if she is stolen? Sure, he is a magistrate."

"No matter for that, as he is my uncle, and— What is that you say?"

The lad had dropped the bridle, and he sprang from the saddle as he muttered something about "a bad breed you are."

The young fellow was still leading the mare to and fro at a smart walk as he addressed the last words to the lad in angry tones.

Turning on his heel as he was about retreating to the tavern, the ragged youth replied, in manly tones:

"I said you come of a bad breed, if your uncle is Squire Turner, and you must get some one else to ride the mare to Coolmain to-night. I forgot the pound note."

As the last words were uttered the lad flung the money at the young man in the most disdainful manner.

The young rider was about to raise his riding-whip to chastise the saucy fellow, but he changed his mind almost on the instant, and burst out into a merry laugh, and remarked:

"Well, Miles, a man may come of bad breed on one side, and not on the other. I see that you do not like my uncle."

"I hate him!"

The words were uttered with a deep venom and force, and the lad clenched his hands at the same time.

"So do I," responded the young rider, in livelier tones, "and it is to spite him that I am sending the mare there to-night."

"If I thought that——"

"Be sure of it, then. Did you ever hear of Clarence Barry?"

"That I did. Do you mean to say that you are the man?"

"That is my name, Miles."

"That is enough for me, sir. Keep the money. I'll take the mare safe to Coolmain, never fear. Let go the bridle, as I hear the gallop of horses coming now. Any word to the old squire when I deliver the animal?"

"Just say to him: 'Here's the mare, you know, squire. Keep her till the law decides.'"

"That's enough. Here they come, and away we go."

And away dashed the gray mare at full speed, while into the tavern sprang the young man, muttering:

"That is strange lad, and I must see more of him. I'll wager he is as true as he is blunt."

Clarence Barry had scarcely gained the inside of the tavern when three horsemen dashed by at a furious pace, while one of them yelled:

"There goes the rascal with the mare. Spur on now, men, and we'll catch him in the town as the police are sure to stop him."

The three riders did spur on at a furious pace, as they were all mounted on splendid animals.

Miles Griffen led them on through the lower streets of the old town, keeping the mare at a lively gallop, as he muttered to himself:

"I see heaps of fun before me, if I can only get safe to Coolmain with the mare, but the sweet darling is tired now, and it would be a mortal pity to force her too much."

One glance back told the lad that the pursuers were gaining on him, and he patted the mare on the neck as he muttered again:

"Come on now and take us if you can, bad cess to you!"

"Thunder and lightning!" yelled the foremost of the pursuers, "he isn't young Barry at all. The little villain will kill the mare on us."

"I'll give you a chase for her, anyway," cried Miles, springing on the mare again and urging her on. "'Tis a long road to Coolmain."

"Send a bullet after the rascal, Graves!" cried another of the pursuers.

"No, no!" thundered the leader, in fierce tones. "I might hit the mare, and he'll be stopped on the way."

"The mischief I will," muttered the lad to himself, with a merry laugh, as he gained the top of the hill. "'Tis little you know who you have to deal with now, Mister Dick Graves."

The lad then urged the willing mare down the hill at a rattling pace, as he yelled back:

"The rogues behind must be fresher than you, my darling, but I'm a light load, and that will make some difference up the steep hill. Choke me if I don't run up with you."

The merry lad was in the act of turning up a hill street, when a harsh voice yelled out:

"Halt there, rider!"

"Go to thunder, Peeler," cried Miles, as he urged the willing mare up the hill.

Cries of rage burst from the pursuers, and as the leader swept by the policeman he yelled:

"Why in the thunder didn't you stop him as you were ordered?"

"How could I when he turned up the hill so suddenly?" replied the policeman.

Miles had not ridden fifty yards up the hill when he sprang from the mare's back, and ran along by her side up the steep, still holding the bridle, as he yelled back to the pursuers:

"If you put me to it, I'll ride her to the death."

"No, no, you rascal!" cried Graves, in great alarm. "If you injure that mare, I'll have your life."

CHAPTER II.

THE MAGIC PASSWORD.

The keen-witted lad saw his advantage at once.

He then realized that Dick Graves, who was one of the leading sportsmen in the country and a great rascal as well, was most anxious to secure the mare in a sound state, and that they would not press him too hard in the chase, fearing injury to the good animal.

Miles Griffen was a reckless rider, but he had a kind heart, and he was all in sympathy with the splendid animal under him.

The men behind him must not overtake him, yet the willing racer was not to be urged too much.

So Miles kept the gray mare at a fair gait until the pursuers would draw too close to him, and then he would yell back:

"Hold up there, you villains, or I will put her to her full speed until she drops under me."

The men behind would then pull up, while Dick Graves would send forth threats in savage tones and grind his teeth as he muttered to himself:

"If the boys of the hill stop the rascal he'll never ride another horse."

The chase kept on in that manner for over three miles, until

they were descending a rugged road with steep hills on each side. When Dick Graves reached a certain point he put his hand to his mouth and sent forth a shrill whistle, the sound of which could be heard on the top of the hills.

Then out from a narrow lane some fifty yards ahead of the fugitive sprang about a dozen men, who blocked the road effectually, as their leader cried aloud:

"Stop them all, boys."

The men thus appearing were dressed as peasants, wearing black crape over their faces, and they were variously armed with rifles, clubs and swords.

When Miles Griffen saw the band springing out on the road, he urged on the mare to greater speed and dashed fearlessly at them as he chuckled to himself:

"Dick Graves thinks he's got the mare now, but won't he be sold!"

A joyous shout burst from the leading pursuer as he saw the effect of his signal, and he spurred on the faster while he yelled:

"Stop the rascal boys, but don't injure the mare, on your lives."

The merry lad did not draw rein until he saw he was within a few yards of the masked band, and when the leader cried:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Molly."

Miles Griffen gave the words in a low tone that could not be heard by the excited pursuers, while he made a motion with his hand to those in front at the same moment.

The word and the motion had a magical effect.

Almost on the instant the masked men sprang to each side of the road, thus leaving the way clear for the rider on the gray mare.

On through the ranks Miles dashed at full speed, speaking a few words in Irish to the band as he swept along.

"Stop the villain!" yelled Graves, in furious tones. "What in thunder are you about, boys?"

The moment the gray mare swept by the masked men formed in the center of the road again, thus blocking the way of the pursuers, while the leader cried out to them:

"Halt, there!"

The three pursuers drew up in sheer astonishment, while Graves thus demanded the cause of their detention, drawing a revolver from his pocket at the same moment.

"Put that pistol back, Master Graves," cried the leader of the masked men, aiming his rifle at the rider, "or I'll tumble ye off the horse while you'd be saying Jack Spratt."

The horseman did put up his weapon, while he cried, in impatient tones:

"But what in the mischief do you mean by letting the rascal ride through and stopping us, men?"

"Those are our orders, sir."

"But who gave you such orders? Didn't I send you word to stop the gray mare if she came this way?"

"Very true," answered the leader of the Moonlighters, "but we couldn't obey you."

"Then out of my way, confound you, and let us ride on."

"You can't do it, Master Graves; so there is no use in getting into a tantrum with us."

As the leader spoke he made a motion to his men, and three of them sprang to seize the bridles of the horses, while as many more presented rifles at the heads of the riders.

Dick Graves fumed and protested in the most violent manner, but the leader's only reply was:

"We are acting under orders, Master Graves, and all your bullying won't budge us a single inch."

"Do you mean to say that we are prisoners, then?"

The leader of the Moonlighters pulled out a large silver watch and looked at the time, as he replied:

"For half an hour only, unless you promise to ride back."

Dick Graves fumed and stormed again ere he cried:

"Blow my infernal eyes if some one don't suffer for this. What a nice way to treat a true friend of the boys."

"The boys are always true to their friends, sir, and they are also pledged to obey orders from the captain. You will have to settle with him—if you should happen to meet him."

"Hang me if I wouldn't like to meet him now at ten paces. Tell me who he is, and I'll challenge him," cried Dick Graves, in blustered tones.

"I can't tell you who he is, sir, but I can tell you that there are plenty here who will take his place against you for a shot or two at ten paces."

"Tut, tut! I didn't come out here to fight a duel with strangers, and you fellows will be sorry for treating me in this fashion. Where was that lad taking the mare to?"

"Out to Squire Turner's."

"The mischief you say! Then she will be mine again very soon. Can we ride on when the half hour is up?"

"To be sure, sir."

As the leader spoke he motioned to the others to lead the horses into the narrow lane.

In the meantime, Miles Griffen kept jogging along on the gray mare until he reached the broad gateway leading up to Squire Turner's mansion.

The mansion was under police protection at the time, as the old squire was a harsh magistrate, a cruel landlord and the most hated man in the neighborhood, by long odds.

On making known his errand, Miles and the mare were led up in front of the mansion, when the old magistrate soon appeared crying:

"What is it I hear? Who sent that horse here to me?"

Morris Turner, who was a tall, stern-looking old man of sixty, bent a pair of keen eyes on the lad as he asked the question.

"'Tis Clarence Barry, sir," was the prompt reply; "and he bid me say to you—here's the mare you know, squire. Keep her till the law decides."

The old squire stared at the mare, then at the lad, and then at two officers standing near him, as he stamped his foot in rage, and exclaimed:

"The infernal young puppy! I'll not have any hand in the scrape. Take the mare out of here, or I'll have you flogged within an inch of your life, you young thief."

"I'm no thief, and it wasn't I stole the mare, you old tyrant," cried Miles, as he turned the mare's head to ride her down the avenue. "If you won't take her, I'll back with her."

The policeman stared in surprise at the bold lad who could thus beard the old magistrate, while the local tyrant grew red with rage, as he yelled:

"Take that rascal up and secure the mare. I'll give him the soundest flogging ever a young rogue got."

Miles quietly turned the mare again, and faced the old fellow, as he replied:

"I'll wager you my life against the finest horse in the stable that you won't strike me one blow, Squire Turner, or have me struck either."

"You audacious young rascal! Seize him, officer, and we'll soon see."

Miles sprang from the mare before the officer could touch him, and in another instant was at the side of the old magistrate, saying:

"Morris Turner, I claim to speak one word in your ear before you go too far with me."

As the bold lad spoke he made a peculiar motion with his hand.

The old magistrate drew back in sheer amazement, and stared at the lad with glaring eyes as he gasped forth:

"Speak it, then."

The mouth of the lad was at the magistrate's ear in an instant, and he then whispered the single word:

"Molly!"

CHAPTER III.

MILES PLAYS SOME PRANKS.

The words uttered into the magistrate's ear had a magical effect on him.

Seizing the lad by both hands, he drew him aside, and his voice was trembling with emotion as he whispered:

"Where is she?"

"She is well and happy, sir, but I can't tell you where she is," answered the lad, in subdued tones. "You will take care of the mare, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes; but tell me about the young lady. Here, some of you men, take that mare into the large stable, and tend to her as you would my favorite hunter. Come into the house with me, lad."

And the cranky old squire led the ragged lad into the house with as much respect as if he were entertaining the lord-lieutenant of Ireland.

When they gained the library the old squire placed Miles in an easy-chair, as he anxiously continued:

"Tell me all you know about the young lady and I will reward you. What is your name, my good lad?"

"They call me Miles, sir. 'Tis I'm awful dry and hungry after the ride."

The squire rang the bell as he cried:

"You must have the best in the house, my good lad. But you will tell me about the young lady. You are in her service, I suppose?"

"Faith, that I am, sir, but it's poor wages she's able to pay."

"That is her own fault, and—"

A male servant entered at the moment, and the squire gave hasty orders for producing a hearty lunch for the lad.

When the man had retired the anxious old man commenced again, saying:

"Is she in the neighborhood now, my boy?"

"She isn't many miles away, sir."

"Are you in her confidence? But you must be!"

"You ought to know that from the word I gave you, sir."

"To be sure, to be sure. Did she send me any message?"

"Only that I was to go up to her room for something she wanted, sir."

"Certainly. I will take you up after you eat your supper."

"But I am to go in alone for what she wants and stay there as long as I require, sir."

"Certainly, certainly. Her word is law in this house. Oh, I wish she had never left it at all."

"You think you have only yourself to blame for that, sir," said the old lad, with a qucer smile.

"Oh, yes; so she may imagine, my lad, but she is in the wrong. Can you tell me one thing?"

"I will if I can, sir."

"Has she ever met Clarence Barry?"

"I think not, sir—up to this very night, at least."

"Where did you meet the young scamp when he gave you the mare?"

"In Bandon, sir."

"Then he will be here soon himself."

"If he don't, sir, Master Dick Graves and his friends will be here, as they chased me to Kilbritton Hill."

"Then what delays them?"

"A word that I had to say to some of the boys we met on the way."

"Oho! And so you are one of the Moonlighters, my lad?"

"I'm not at confession now, sir."

"Well, well, I won't annoy you, as you are in her service. Eat and drink away, now, and then I will lead you up to where you want to go, my lad."

The servant entered with refreshments at the moment, and Miles fell to with a right good will, while the squire kept prying him with questions, to many of which the droll lad gave very evasive answers, or none at all.

After the meal was over the squire led Miles up the stairs, saying:

"I suppose you don't care to meet Mr. Graves when he comes?"

"I don't care a pin about him, sir, one way or the other."

"On the hallway of the second floor Miles stopped to whisper some words to a pretty young servant girl, and the squire turned a moment after, crying:

"Confound your impudence, you young scamp! How dare you kiss one of my girls before my very face?"

"Your back was turned at the time, sir; and sure it's no harm to kiss me own first cousin, Norry Roche."

"And is this girl your cousin?"

"To be sure, sir—on the mother's side. Give me another, my darling."

And the young girl gave him another with great gusto, while Miles whispered some words into her ear.

Just as the playful lad entered the bedroom Dick Graves and his friends dashed up to the door, and the squire hastened down to meet them.

On entering the house, Dick Graves had a friendly wrangle with the squire about the gray mare, but the latter declined to give the animal up, saying:

"She will remain here until the law decides about her."

"Then I will be compelled to steal her from you again, squire, as she is entered in the great race two weeks from this very day," said Graves.

"And she will run in the race, but not under your colors, Mister Graves," said Miles Griffon, who entered the drawing room at that moment.

Dick Graves stared at the lad for a moment or so, and then cried:

"By George! If this ain't the little rascal who rode the mare here. I have a good mind to horsewhip him."

"You will not touch the lad in my house, Graves," cried the squire.

"Nor in any other house, either," cried the bold Miles, as he grinned at the baffled sportsman, "and for a very good reason at that."

"What is the reason, you little rascal?" demanded Graves.

"Because you can't spell the word able. Try it if you dare."

Graves raised his riding-whip, but before it could fall the active lad sprang in on him and tore it from his grasp, crying:

"You wouldn't dare raise it to your match, but I happen to be more than your match. Take that!"

And the daring lad gave the man a severe cut across the face.

The sportsman's friends were about to spring on the lad, when the squire thundered forth:

"Don't touch the lad, on your lives, as he is my friend."

"I'll have his life," yelled Graves, as he felt his face. "Squire Turner, if you defend the scamp, I'll hold you to an account."

"I can take my own part," cried Miles, as he flourished the whip, "and I'll give the gentleman any satisfaction he likes."

"You confounded little brat, if you were only a gentleman!" cried Graves.

"Maybe I'm a better gentleman than you are," replied the lad. "In any case, I have a gentleman at my back who will fight you for me."

"Where is he and who is he?" demanded Dick Graves.

"Give me ten minutes and I will send him here to answer for himself," said Miles, as he retreated to the door.

The lad sprang out into the hall, to encounter the pretty servant girl, who was listening at the door.

On giving the girl a sign she ran up the stairs after him, and from there into the bedroom before mentioned.

When the door was closed the pretty girl embraced the lad again, as she cried in anxious tones:

"Oh, my darling, what are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to test that boaster's courage, Norry. Help me get on this fine suit of clothes I laid out."

"But, my sweet one; what if he should fight and shoot you?"

"He's not able, Norry, as you know that I can hit a sixpence every time."

"But you don't mean to kill him?"

"He deserves it, as he is the cause of all our trouble. But I'll let him off with a shot in the leg, if he has the courage to fight."

The pretty girl burst into tears and embraced the lad again, as she moaned forth:

"Oh, my darling Miss Molly, think of the broken hearts you'll leave behind if he should kill you."

CHAPTER IV.

MOLLY RAISES THE MISCHIEF.

When the pretended Miles ran out of the room in quest of a champion, Dick Graves turned to the master of the house and asked:

"Squire, who in the mischief is that impudent lad?"

"All I can tell you is that he is in the service of my niece, Graves, and he must not be abused."

"In the service of Miss Molly! Why in the mischief didn't you tell me that before?" cried the sportsman in evident alarm. "On my solemn oath, if I knew that, I would not say a word to the lad if he stole my purse as well as my horse. Where is he?"

"Gone after some one to fight you, I presume," answered the squire, with a droll smile. "Was it he who stole the mare from you?"

"No, it was Clarence Barry himself, I think, judging from the description we got of him."

"Then why don't you challenge the young scamp, my nephew?"

"I will, when I meet him. Who is this riding up to the door now?"

The old squire ran to the window to look out at the new arrival, and then exclaimed, in alarmed tones:

"Hang me if it isn't Clarence Barry himself, and now there will be the mischief to pay in earnest. Graves, remember that he is my sister's son."

The bully trembled a little and turned pale as he heard steps in the hallway, and he kept in the background when the young horseman entered the apartment, with a bright smile on his handsome face, crying:

"How are you, uncle? Is the mare safe in the stable? Hallo, Graves; you were behind in the race this time."

The old squire advanced on his nephew in an angry manner, as he cried:

"You're a young scamp, indeed! Why did you send the mare to me?"

"Why, sir, I understood that you said I was more entitled to her than Graves here, and that if you once had her in your possession, you would—"

"I would shoot you, if I were Graves," interrupted the squire. "That's the way we settled such matters in my young days."

"And I have no objection to settle the matter in that way with Mr. Graves now," said Clarence Barry. "I presume you will act as my second, uncle?"

"Not I, you young puppy. A magistrate taking part in a duel?"

"Then why did you propose it, sir? Well, Graves, what is it?"

Dick Graves had been consulting with his two friends, and he now advanced to address Clarence Barry, saying:

"See here, Barry, are you responsible for the acts and words of the young rascal who rode the mare here?"

"I never saw the lad until I met him in Bandon this evening; but as he brought the mare all safe, I'll take his part. What has he done?"

"He has helped to steal the mare, and he has given me impudence."

"In stealing the mare he acted for me, Graves; and as he appeared to be a civil lad, I think you deserved it if he gave you impudence. Just consider that I was in his place at the moment, and what then?"

Dick Graves was a powerful and active man of thirty, and he had made a forward motion at the moment, launching out with his right hand, crying:

"That's how I'd treat you, horse-thief!"

Clarence Barry warded off the blow and dealt the sportsman a sharp one between the eyes, as he cried:

"Not so fast, Graves."

"No more of this work here," cried the old squire, getting in between the boxers, "or I'll fine the pair of you very heavily. You young scamp, what brought you here, anyway?"

The question was addressed to his nephew, who readily answered:

"I came here to look after my mare, of course, sir. Am I not welcome in the house of my uncle?"

"No, sir, you are not. I have dropped you forever, and there is the door."

And the old squire pointed to the hallway with a significant motion.

The discarded nephew bowed to his uncle as he backed toward the door, and he then turned to Graves, saying:

"We will meet again; and you will never keep the mare, even if you should steal her from here, as you will try."

The young man then turned to leave the drawing-room, when he encountered a young gent, who appeared to be a medical student, who was followed by a ragged, dirty-faced lad.

The new-comer sported long hair, a pair of heavy mustaches, and colored eye-glasses; and as he glanced around the room his eyes fell on the old squire, and he exclaimed with an affected Cockney drawl:

"My dear uncle Morris, I believe?"

The old squire advanced to take the hand of the young man, as he demanded:

"And pray who are you, sir?"

"Why, I am your nephew Walter from London, dear sir. Where is dear sister?"

"You Miss Molly's brother?" cried the squire. "I declare, but

you do resemble the dear girl. I did not expect you here for some days yet."

"Why, the fact is, good governor, that I was anxious to come and see you," replied the young fellow, as he glanced around at the others. "Ah, which of those persons is Graves?"

The sportsman advanced on the instant and offered his hand to the young man, saying:

"I am Mr. Richard Graves, sir, and I am delighted to meet Miss Molly Turner's brother."

The young gent from London did not take the offered hand, but drew back a step or two as he glared at Graves through the glasses, and then cried:

"Ah, and so you are Mr. Graves? Egad, you will have to settle with me, sir, for the insult you offered my sister."

"Is it me to insult Miss Molly? Why, sir, you cannot mean it!" exclaimed the astonished sportsman, as he glared at the young fellow and then at the others in the room.

Clarence Barry was lingering near the door, as he had received a hint from the ragged lad to remain.

The lad also kept in the background at the time, as if now abashed at the presence of the young gent from London.

"How did Mr. Graves insult Miss Molly, nephew?" asked the squire.

"Egad, sir, did he not threaten to horsewhip her servant there? As my dear sister is not a man, I will be under the necessity of punishing this fellow. You must fight me now, sir."

As the stranger uttered the last words he flung one of his gloves at Graves and hit him in the face with it.

"How like his sister!" cried the squire, as he got in front of his nephew and pushed him back. By George, Graves, you have your hands full to-night. You here yet, you young scamp?"

The question was addressed to Clarence Barry, who advanced from the door to take the hand of the young stranger, as he said:

"Allow me to speak to my cousin for a moment, uncle, and then I will leave you in peace. Mr. Walter Turner, my name is Barry, and I am your cousin. I have a previous quarrel with that person there, and I insist on fighting him first."

The young gent from London took the hand then offered to him, and stared at Clarence, as he asked:

"Are you Clarence Barry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Delighted to meet you, cousin, as I have heard about you. As to my giving way in this affair of honor, it is out of the question. That fellow insulted my sister in the presence of her servant, and he must fight or make an abject apology to the lad. Then I will be happy to back you in your quarrel."

"Tut, tut," cried the old squire; "this business has gone far enough, nephew from London. I know Mr. Graves here would not offend Miss Molly for all the world."

"Certainly not," cried Dick Graves. "I did not know that the lad was Miss Molly's servant, and I will apologize to him. As to you, Barry, we will have it out before long, you may be sure."

"The sooner the better," said Clarence, as he turned to leave. "Mr. Walter Turner, I hope to meet you again, and where I will be more welcome."

The young fellow from London seized Clarence by the arm and looked at his uncle, as he asked:

"And why is not my cousin welcome here, Uncle Morris?"

The old squire turned away as he answered in some confusion:

"I will explain hereafter, Walter. We do not agree on politics."

"Politics be blowed! I say, Cousin Clarence, you know my sister, of course?"

"I never had the pleasure of meeting the young lady, Cousin Walter."

"The deuce you say, and you cousins! Just wait till I introduce you. Where is my dear sister, Uncle Morris?"

The old squire hemmed and colored again ere he answered:

"She is on a visit to friends in Bandon at present."

"Then I will ride back to see her, as it is not too late yet."

The old squire took the young stranger's arm and led him toward the door, as he whispered:

"I wish to speak to you in private, Walter. Excuse me a few moments, friends."

"You will wait for me, Cousin Clarence, as I will ride back with you," cried the young stranger, as he left the room with the squire.

The ragged lad had disappeared.

On reaching the library the magistrate commenced in very serious tones:

"Walter, do you know why I sent for you to come to Ireland?"

"To see my sister, I suppose, uncle."

"Yes; and to make you my heir, if we can agree together. Molly has been acting very badly with me."

"The deuce you say."

"I assure you she has. She has turned out a very wild girl, to say the least."

"In what way, uncle?"

"Well, she has taken to hunting and horseracing, and she mixes with the lowest people around here. Besides, she fought with me about my tenants."

"How was that, uncle?"

"Why, some of the beggars refused to pay rents, and I put them out. Then Molly raised the mischief and told me to my very face that it was a burning shame to dispossess the beggars. She even went so far as to say that if she happened to be one of the tenants thus served she would join the Moonlighters and shoot me some fine night."

"Egad, and she meant it too, uncle. Molly was always sympathizing with the people, you know. Well, what came of it?"

"I got angry, and we quarreled. She then left the house."

"Hello! Do you mean to say that you discarded Molly because she did not approve of your sending people out of their homes to starve on the roadside?"

"It was her own fault if she left my house, as I loved her dearly and still dote on her, with all her folly."

"Come now, uncle, is there not something else the matter? What about some suitor you want to force on her?"

"Mr. Richard Graves is a very wealthy man, and——"

"Is it that puppy in the other room to wed my sister?"

"Why not, sir?"

"Farewell, uncle. You and I would not hit it at all, as I think Molly was right. You will find another heir in the family, as I would not touch your wealth."

The young fellow moved to the door, while the old fellow cried:

"You insolent puppy, you are worse than Clarence Barry."

"Glad to hear that he is in my way of thinking, Uncle Morris. I say, sir?"

"What is it?"

"Where can I find Molly?"

"Up on the hills with the Moonlighters, for all I know."

"Then I will go and join them also and have a slap at some of the tyrant landlords around here. Thank goodness, my mother was Irish, you know."

The young fellow then slipped out of the library and disappeared, while the old squire stamped and stormed, crying:

"You infernal young puppy! Why, he is even worse than Molly. Oh, where will I find a suitable heir to all my wealth and property?"

"Take your own son back," cried a voice, as if coming from the chimney-piece.

The squire started, with a joyous smile on his face, and exclaimed:

"Hang me if that isn't the dear girl back again!"

He then moved to a speaking-tube near the mantel-piece, and put his mouth to it, saying:

"I say, Molly?"

"Well, sir?"

"Your brother from London is here. Come down and let us be friends again."

"Not unless you do as I asked you, sir, and more now."

"What is the more, girl?"

"You must invite Clarence Barry to remain here, and——"

"Nonsense, girl. Have you seen the young scamp?"

"I have, sir, and I like him very much. If you do not forgive him, I will raise the very mischief with you."

"Do you want me to break my oath?"

"Hang you wicked oath! He is your sister's son, and you received him as such this very night."

The squire stamped furiously as he answered through the pipe:

"What is that you said about my own son, you wicked girl?"

"I advised you to forgive him, and take him back, before he goes to the very mischief altogether."

"The infernal rascal! Where is he now?"

"Up on the hills with the Moonlighters, and he swears that he will attack you here in your own house if you do not give him a share of his birthright, you unnatural old master!"

"You infernal hussy!" cried the squire, as he closed the tube and sprang to the door, "I'll lock you up in the mad-house until you come to your senses. Here, officer, come up-stairs with me."

Followed by the police officer, the angry squire ran up-stairs to Molly's bed-room, only to find it empty.

While he was still searching for the wild girl in the adjoining rooms a voice on the lawn below fell on his ears, crying:

"Clarence Barry, hasten out and ride with me, as I am off to the hills to find my dear sister."

"Thunder and furies!" yelled Dick Graves, from the drawing-room window, "the young fellow has got my gray mare!"

"'Tis Molly herself!" yelled the squire, from the window above. Officer, mount and pursue her."

"Yes, come on, all of you!" cried the wild girl, as she cantered down the lawn. "The mare has had a rest now, and I will beat you all to the hills. Uncle, I will bring you to your senses yet."

"Get out a horse for me!" cried the old squire. "Ride after her, officers and friends, but don't fire at her, on your lives. Oh, the girl will break by heart yet. Stop her, Clarence Barry, and I will forgive you!"

The wild young girl rode away down to the road yelling with delight, and Clarence Barry was the first to follow her on the horse he had brought from the town, as he said to himself:

"Hang me if I don't believe it is the lad who rode the mare from Bandon as well. Can it be that it was my Cousin Molly all the time?"

He larded it over his tenants and his servants, while his son was a free-and-easy young man who believed in the rights of his fellow-beings.

When young Morris was about twenty the stern old squire drove him from the house and discarded him.

Then he sent for his brother's daughter, declaring that he would make her his heir—if she minded him.

Molly did become a great favorite with the tyrant until she showed that she had a will of her own and told him some truths which were not to his liking.

The young girl was bold enough to tell him that he did not treat his son or his tenants in a proper manner; and she also refused to accept Dick Graves as her husband.

A violent quarrel then ensued, and Molly left the house, swearing that she would compel him to do justice to his son.

As Squire Turner loved the wayward girl above all things on earth, and as he feared her as well, for certain reasons, she had an open invitation to return to the mansion whenever she pleased.

All the servants in the house, male or female, doted on the bright, wild, winsome girl, and she could command them as she pleased, indoors and out.

Some suspected that Molly was in love with her young Cousin Morris, and that she often met him on the hills in the neighborhood.

Others whispered that young Morris was the daring leader of a band of moonlighters, and that he had hitherto protected his unnatural father, when other severe landlords had felt the vengeance of the mountain outlaws.

Mr. Richard Graves was a landlord as well as a sportsman, but he managed to play a double part, and thereby kept in with the boys of the hills.

It was also rumored that Dick Graves had something to do with the turning of young Morris Turner from his father's door, and that he had some secret influence over the tyrant squire.

As Clarence Barry was first in the second chase after the gray mare that night, he pressed on as fast as his hack would bear him, wondering the while at the extraordinary actions of the wild girl before him.

Molly drew up on a hill until the young man was close to her, and she turned in the saddle and cried:

"Is that you, Clarence Barry?"

"That is my name. Is it possible that I am speaking to my Cousin Molly?" replied the young man, as he urged on his horse to gain her side.

"Yes, I am Molly. Don't come too near, or I will push on the horse, and I don't want to injure her."

"Then why did you take her out of the stable?"

"To draw Dick Graves out after her and have some fun on the hills with him and my uncle."

"But they are after us now with the mounted police!"

"What of that? The police won't fire at me, I know."

"I say, Molly, are you the lad who rode the mare here for me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst out the lively girl. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I can't understand how you managed to play two parts at once just now in the house."

"I didn't. Norry Roche, my faithful companion, played the part of the lad for me just now, while I was challenging Dick Graves; but the fellow won't fight."

"You hate Dick Graves, Cousin Molly?"

"I have reason for it, as I know him to be a treacherous wretch."

"So do I. He got the mare from me by a mean trick. What were you doing when I met you in Bandon?"

"Looking for a friend. Keep back or they'll think we are planning together; and I am your friend, Clarence, although we never met before to-night."

"Then you will not injure the gray mare, as I prize her very much."

"It is to keep her for you that I am taking her up on the hills, Clarence, as I am certain that Dick Graves was plotting to steal her again to-night. They are coming fast now, and you keep back with them, if you want to see fun."

Clarence Barry did draw up a little, while the lively girl urged the mare on faster.

Five mounted policemen surrounded the squire as he rode up the hill, and after them galloped Dick Graves and his two friends, who were armed with revolvers.

When Molly reached the top of the hill, she turned the mare into a narrow lane as she yelled back:

"Beware of the moonlighters, uncle, and remember what I told you."

"Ride after her, officers," cried the squire, and take her at all hazards. I will put her in a mad-house."

Dick Graves rode up to the side of the squire at that moment, as he said, in a low voice:

"If you agree to surrender the mare to me, I will capture the young lady without much trouble, squire."

"Catch the pair of them, and keep them, for all I care."

"I'll take you at your word," answered Dick Graves, "and I'll marry the young lady as soon as I can. Push up after me, officers. Barry, I'll have the mare again."

The last words were uttered in a loud voice as the sportsman swept past the young man into the lane, followed by the policemen and the others.

Molly had disappeared with the gray mare in a turn in the lane. When Dick Graves reached that turn a loud voice cried out:

"Halt, on your lives!"

The voice came from a ledge of rock on the side of the narrow

CHAPTER V.

OUT ON THE IRISH HILLS.

Squire Turner had an only son who had given him much trouble. Young Morris Turner was a lively lad in his earlier days, but his heart was in the right place, and he would have been a good man if properly treated.

The father was a natural tyrant, at home and abroad.

path, while over a dozen rifles were aimed down at the party at the same moment.

Dick Graves drew up in the narrow path, and so did the others, the former cried aloud:

"Don't fire, boys, as we are not after you at all."

"Who are you after, then?" yelled a voice from the rock, as a tall man wearing a black mask appeared thereon.

"We are after the person who just rode by on the gray mare."

Molly, who was still dressed in her male attire, sprang upon the rock beside the moonlighter, as she cried:

"And you won't get the gray mare or the person either, Dick Graves."

"Gracious heavens, Molly," cried her uncle, do you associate with these rascals?"

"Those rascals are just what you made them, uncle, by driving them from their own homes, and they don't happen to be rascals at all. They are peaceable hunters on the bills."

"I would like to speak to the leader," cried Dick Graves.

"Then speak out," cried the man on the rock beside Molly.

"The mare belongs to me, and I demand her back now," cried Graves.

"The mare is mine," cried Clarence Barry, "and I should have her."

Molly consulted with the masked man beside her for a few moments, and then the latter cried:

"As you both claim the mare, why not fight for her at once?"

"I am ready to fight him on the instant for the mare or for fun," cried Clarence.

Thinking that the police would not allow the fight, Dick Graves cried:

"I will fight for her, also."

"Nonsense!" yelled the squire. "It is against all law. I call on you rascals up there to surrender the mare, and lay down your arms as well."

"Surrender yourself, squire!" cried the leader, "or we will send a deadly volley at you. If the police point a gun at us, we'll bang away at you. Take good aim, boys, and cover them all."

As the man gave the order he sprang down to the shelter of the rock, and those in the lane could see the barrels of the deadly weapons pointed at them, while those who held them were concealed.

Molly still kept her position on the huge rock as she cried:

"You are caught in a trap, uncle, and you must surrender. I am a prisoner also, and I feel for you."

"You ungrateful girl!"

"Surrender, or we'll fire!" yelled the leader of the band. "Off of your horses, and place the guns on the side of the path one by one."

The police were under the control of the squire, and they looked to him for orders.

Morris Turner was a stubborn and a brave man, and was about to give an order for the attack, when Dick Graves moved back to him, and whispered:

"If we act wise, sir, we'll bag all the rascals without firing a shot. Take my advice and give in now, and we'll take them all afterward."

"Once more, surrender!" yelled the voice above, while Molly also disappeared from the rock.

"Lay down your arms, officers," said the squire, "as we are caught in a trap. I'll hang those fellows yet."

The surrender was made in due form, the masked outlaws hastening down and securing the prisoners as soon as the weapons were placed by the side of the path.

The squire raved like a madman as he was led up behind the rocks with the other prisoners, while Dick Graves appeared to take the affair as a matter of course.

On reaching the shelter of the ambushade, the squire looked around for his wild niece, but Molly was not to be seen by him, although she was present.

To the great disgust of the old tyrant, the prisoners were all blindfolded, and they were led along the hill under a strong guard, another party of the moonlighters preceding them with the captured horses and arms.

As they moved along the prisoners could hear their captors exchanging private signals with other parties along the hill; and, judging from the tramping around them, they came to the conclusion that the moonlighters were mustering in large force.

On reaching a certain spot, the squire was placed on his horse again, a gag was put on his mouth, while a disguised voice said to him:

"Ride on now, you old skinflint, and remember you are in the power of those who owe you no mercy."

The enraged squire did ride on a full gallop, his horse being guided by two masked men who rode at his side, but he had not the least idea where he was going.

After a smart journey over rough roads, old Morris Turner was taken from his horse again, led into a house and placed on an easy-chair.

The gag was then removed from his mouth, and a hoarse voice fell on his ear, saying:

"Do you know where you are now, Morris Turner?"

"How can I tell when I cannot see, you infernal rascal?" was the reply.

The bandage was removed from his eyes on the instant, and the squire stared around in astonishment ere he exclaimed:

"Why, confound it, I am in my own library!"

"So you are, squire," replied the hoarse voice of the masked man

who stood before him. "We brought you back to your own mansion to make terms with you, and——"

"Terms with me, you infernal scoundrel!" yelled the squire, as he reached his hand for the bell-rope. "I'll make terms with you with a vengeance!"

The man before him laughed merrily when the angry man discovered that the rope of the alarm bell had been cut, and he then cried, removing his mask at the same moment:

"You are helpless in your own halls, valiant squire, as we are in possession from cellar to garret. The moonlighters have taken the fortress by stratagem, and I led the assault."

The amazed squire gazed at the speaker for a few moments and then fell back in the chair as he gasped forth the single word:

"Molly!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILD GIRL'S PRANKS.

The old squire was more amazed than alarmed at thus finding himself confronted by his niece in his own house, as he had never once imagined that the capricious creature would countenance serious injury to one who loved her so well.

Having had his own tryannical way for so long, and ruling all around him with the iron hand of the law, the landlord magistrate could not bring himself to even ponder on the thought that he could goad his dependents to desperation, much less turn his own blood relations against him.

The greatest and noblest of English statesmen had been compelled to say that "Ireland was the Poland of England."

That is the living truth.

Backed by fifteen thousand English soldiers and ten thousand policemen, all armed with the best weapons in the world, the foreign landlords of Ireland crushed the helpless people as the Poles were never crushed by the Russians.

Some Englishmen will tell you that Ireland is governed by the same laws as those prevailing in England and Scotland.

That is sheer nonsense!

The English and the Scotch make the laws for their own lands, and they are enforced by chosen men of their own nations.

The cruel laws governing Ireland are made in England, and they are enforced at the point of the bayonet, by English officials.

But as every school-boy in America has read Ireland's sad history, we will do away with politics and on with the story.

Although no one else appeared in the library with Molly, the amazed old squire realized at once that his strong mansion was in the hands of the hated moonlighters.

While staring at the wayward girl, he asked himself:

"Can it be possible that she is in league with the lawless rascals who have threatened my life?"

Molly appeared to read what was passing in his mind, and burst out into another peal of laughter, crying:

"Dear uncle, did I not tell you that you would drive me to desperation?"

"Silence, girl, or you will drive me mad. What is the meaning of this infernal outrage?"

"It should be all plain enough, sir. Did you not threaten the people of the hills and dare them to do their worst, feeling yourself here with the police?"

"I did, and I defy them still. I will hang every rascal of them yet."

"Wait till you catch them first, brave uncle. As it is they have got you now, and it will be a difficult matter for me to save your neck."

"Save my neck! Confound you, girl, I will have police and soldiers enough here soon to eat all the moonlighters on the hills. The rascals can't frighten me."

"If you keep on that way I will have to leave you to your fate, uncle."

"Go, and be hanged to you. But wait a few moments, you ungrateful girl."

"Pray tell me how I am ungrateful, sir?"

"Did I not take you from half starvation, to make you mistress of my house and fortune?"

"To make me your slave, you mean, as you do with all around you, and your own brave son as well."

"The infernal puppy! I suppose he is one of the cut-throats?"

"Very likely, sir."

"Is he the leader of the band?"

"He is not."

"Who is, then?"

"I am."

The squire stared at the bright face before him for a few moments, and then burst out into a fit of laughter, ere he cried:

"Don't be ridiculous, Molly! I know you have some influence with the rascals, but the idea of your being their leader is too preposterous."

"It is the truth, nevertheless, uncle; and I tell you the secret, because I know you will keep it—for your own sake."

The girl put a decided emphasis on the last words, while a stern expression appeared in her flashing eyes.

"Why for my own sake? Confound it all, you treat me as if I were your slave, you impudent, audacious girl."

"And you are my slave—to a certain extent. Better have me for your master than Dick Graves, as he is a scoundrel."

"I tell you Graves is not my master."

"I tell you he is; and, more than that, I will soon find out the secret of his power over you."

The squire covered his face with his hands and groaned aloud:

"Oh, Molly—Molly, let him alone, if you have any mercy on me!"

"It is because I have some mercy on you that I insist in finding out his secret, sir. The rascal has been the evil genius of the family, although you are not a saint yourself."

"I tell you he has never influenced me in any way."

"And I tell you he has. Who was it told you the story about Morris losing so much money at the races?"

"Wasn't it the truth?"

"No matter about that. But—pshaw!—I know it was he who drove your only son as a beggar out on the world."

"Morris in an infernal rebel, Molly."

"And why shouldn't he be? Why should he not love the land of his birth and hate her oppressors?"

"But I am English born, Molly."

"And so are most of Ireland's cruel oppressors. Thank fortune that your son is not like you."

"He'll never have an acre of my land, the rebel puppy."

"He'll have every acre of it," said Molly, with great force. "And now we are coming to the point I want."

"What do you want, you wretched, willful, brazen girl?"

"Ugly words from you don't trouble me in the least, sir, as I know that you would not listen to others using them to me. Now listen to what I want."

"Go on—go on."

"I want you to restore your son to his birthright."

"Is that all, girl?"

"It is not. I want you to treat your poor tenants as well as the best landlord in the country, and that is not asking very much."

"Go on, Molly. Is there anything I can do for yourself now?"

"Don't you bother about me, as I can do for myself. I also want you to break with Dick Graves, and never let him enter your house again."

The squire turned deadly pale at the last proposition, and then groaned forth:

"Molly, Molly, don't harp on that subject, I beg of you, or you will turn my love for you into intense hate."

"Better your hate than the ruin of you and yours. Graves must go!"

"Go to the mischief yourself, girl. And what is to become of me if I refuse all your requests point-blank?"

"You will see, sir! Do you refuse?"

"Most decidedly! The rascals with you may out me limb from limb ere I agree to such terms!"

"Very well, sir; we will see."

Molly clapped her hands and four masked men sprang into the room, while she put on her own mask ere they could see her animated features.

At a signal from her the moonlighters seized the squire and bound and blindfolded him almost on the instant, in spite of his struggles and dire threats.

Having given a few directions to the masked men in whispers, the lively girl then darted out of the library and ran down into the cellar.

In one of the strong apartments of that cellar Dick Graves was secured as a prisoner, and the sportsman was not in a very amiable mood when Molly entered.

He was also bound and blindfolded when the disguised girl entered the cellar, but she removed the bandage at once, as she remarked, in her assumed, husky tones:

"And so you want to see me, Master Dick Graves?"

The man looked up at the masked face, and then around the bare and prison-like apartment, ere he demanded, in indignant tones:

"What in the mischief does this treatment mean, and who are you?"

"I am the leader of the Moonlighters of Coolmain, and——"

"Go to thunder!" interrupted Dick, as he measured the speaker from head to foot. "Morris Turner is a head taller than you are."

"Morris Turner is not the leader of our band at present, as he has resigned and I have been elected in his place. Now I have serious business with you."

The speaker's voice became more impressive, and a soiled hand was raised in a threatening manner at the same time, as if to emphasize the words.

Dick Graves was still peering around the place when he became attracted by the motion of the hand, and his voice trembled a little as he said:

"I don't understand why I should be used in this way when I am all in all with the boys."

"You were all in all with the boys, you treacherous hound, but you have been found out. Dick Graves, you are now on trial for your life."

"On trial for my life! And you call me a traitor? Come, come, friend, whoever you are, you are carrying this joke too far. In what way did I ever betray the boys?"

"Rogue and fool, it was only last evening that you gave information in Bandon against young Morris Turner, whom you have driven to ruin almost. Do you dare deny the charge?"

The cunning rascal grew paler still, but he mustered up all his courage and blurted forth:

"That is not so at all. The charge is as false as——"

"The charge is true," interrupted the disguised girl, as she drew

a legal paper from the pocket of her coat, "and here is the proof. Treacherous villain, can you deny that this is your statement, over your own signature?"

The traitor's face assumed a ghastly color as he stared at the paper and then up at the masked face, while he stammered forth:

"For mercy's sake, how did that get into your hands?"

"That is my affair. You know how we punish traitors?"

Dick Graves was a ready-witted customer, as he was far from being an arrant coward, but he was thoroughly nonplused for the moment by the crushing evidence thus produced.

Staring at his accuser for a few moments, he at length regained some of his composure and blurted forth:

"That was only a trick on my part to deceive the magistrates in Bandon. I never meant to betray Morris Turner. On my solemn oath, I didn't."

"'Tis a trick you will pay dear for, however," thundered forth his accuser in fearful tones. "You have already been tried and condemned, and now I will pass sentence on you."

"Pass sentence on me?" gasped Graves, in great terror. "Thunder alive, you don't mean to say that you are going to put me out of the way?"

"You will swing from the nearest tree in ten minutes, and may Heaven have mercy on your sinful soul!"

The sentence was uttered in the most solemn tones, and the voice of the judge was scarcely hushed when a masked man, followed by six others, entered the apartment bearing a rope.

They all marched toward the prisoner with solemn steps, and the hangman at once proceeded to adjust the rope on the neck of the trembling man, who was dumb with terror.

Dick Graves knew that the outlaws of the hills were not in the habit of trifling with those who betrayed them, and while he was not actually enrolled in what is known as the inner circle, he had taken an obligation that bound him to the moonlighters.

During those moments of terror he cursed himself for his folly in allowing his hatred of young Morris Turner to get the better of his good sense, and he was fully prepared to make any sacrifices in order to save his life, if it were possible.

While the hangman was still adjusting the rope, the wretched man fell on his knees, crying:

"Oh, boys, boys, spare my life, I will give you half of what I am worth and be your best friend after."

"It is too late, you are doomed," replied Molly. "Drag him out, boys, and blindfold him at once. On with the gag also, although we are not afraid that his cries will be heard."

"Mercy, mercy, whoever you are. Spare my life, if only for an hour, and I will tell you a secret—a great secret, entirely for young Morris Turner," pleaded Dick Graves, in the most abject manner possible.

"Young Morris Turner will get his own rights without knowing any of your rascally secrets," cried Molly.

"But I hold a secret that will make the old squire your slave for life."

"He is our slave now, and he will swing with you if he does not behave himself."

"But I tell you he will die sooner than give in to you unless you had the hold on him that I have. Oh, good sir, whoever you are, spare my life and I will set young Morris right."

"Whisper it to me, then," said Molly, in the most careless tones, "and we will see what it is worth."

The disguised girl placed her ear to the prisoner's mouth, and was about to speak in whispered tones, when one of the masked followers ran into the cellar, crying:

"Captain dear, the mounted peelers and dragoons are riding along the shore road in full force."

A joyous exclamation burst forth from the prisoner, and he turned on the leader of the moonlighters and exclaimed:

"The mischief take you, you infernal hangman, but you will get your due now and no mistake."

"Don't crow yet, Master Graves," was the quiet reply, "as the fight is not over by long odds."

Molly then turned to her followers and gave some directions in tones that could not be overheard by the prisoner.

The man was then gagged and blindfolded and led out of the cellar.

In less than three minutes after he found himself lifted on a horse, while a voice hissed into his ear:

"You are a dead man, Dick Graves, if you do not do as you are told."

The bandage was removed from his eyes on the instant.

On glancing around for a few moments, he mentally exclaimed:

"Thunder alive, but we are on the lawn at the back of the squire's mansion! Can it be possible they are going to fight the troops. Choke me if there's not the squire and my friends!"

Yes, the old squire and Dick's three friends were close beside him on horses, and they were all gagged and secured in the same manner.

At that moment the tramp of galloping horses was heard on the lawn below, and then a loud voice was heard behind the prisoners, crying:

"Halt, soldiers!"

CHAPTER VII.

UP ON THE HILLS AGAIN.

The soldiers did halt in front of the mansion on hearing the order, and then the officer in command cried:

"Where is Squire Turner?"

In answer to the question the squire and the other prisoners were led out to the side of the building, with a mounted guard on each side of them.

Molly, with her mask on, rode in front of the squad on a fine black horse, and she held a sword in her right hand as she answered back:

"Captain Jarvis, Squire Turner is here, and he is my prisoner."

"Your prisoner, fellow! What insolence are you talking?" demanded the officer, as he started his horse forward.

"Keep back there, or down you go," cried Molly, in fierce, hoarse tones. "If you advance another step, a bullet will tumble you from the saddle and may do more with you. You can see that we are well prepared for you."

About twenty-five horsemen, all wearing masks, dashed out from the stables at the moment, and they all ranged themselves behind the prisoners, as if with the intention of using them as shields.

Molly drew back on her own steed until she was beside her uncle.

She then drew the gag from his mouth, as she whispered to him:

"I know the foul secret of your life, wretched uncle. Follow my orders now, or I will proclaim it here before your friends and foes."

The old squire turned one look of hatred on Dick Graves, which was not observed by the traitor, and then answered his niece:

"Don't drive me too far."

"Not I, as justice is all I want. Tell the officers to keep back."

The old squire hesitated a moment, and Molly added, in whispered tones:

"Hesitate and I will proclaim your crime to the world."

"Hold back, officer," cried the old squire. "I am safe here."

"But I should and will crush those rebels on the instant, squire," protested the officer.

Prompted by Molly, the squire said: "If you advance, much bloodshed will follow, and we will be the first to fall in the strife. The deadly weapons are pointed at us now."

And such was the fact.

While the horsemen ranged behind the prisoners were pointing their guns at the armed soldiers in front, those guarding the civilians had their weapons directed against them.

The gag was withdrawn from Dick Graves' mouth at the time, and prompted by the masked guard at his side, he cried out:

Captain Jarvis, I implore you not to advance at present, or we'll be the first victims."

Captain Jarvis was a dashing officer, who had acquired a brilliant reputation in the Egyptian war, and he was most anxious to attack the moonlighters, as he held them in the most perfect contempt.

The moonlighters were not to be despised, however.

Having secured the rifles and revolvers of the prisoners, they had also seized all the best arms to be found in the fortified mansion.

They had also taken horses enough from the stables to mount about thirty of their number in all.

The police and soldiers numbered at least fifty men; but if a struggle must ensue they would fight at one great disadvantage, as several of the moonlighters held positions in the mansion from whence they could fire out at their enemies, while a dozen more were concealed in the grove flanking the police and the soldiers.

While the officer in command was hesitating whether to parley further or make a dash at the rebels, a young lad dashed out of the grove and ran to Molly, saying in very low tones:

"Captain agra, there's a heap more of the villains galloping along the road, and the one you knows says 'tis better to make for the fountain."

"Tell him we will, Corney," answered Molly; "but tell him also to fire a few volleys of blanks at the fellows in front here as we make a dash back with the prisoners."

"What will the signal be, captain dear?" asked the lad.

"I'll fire a pistol in the air."

"Very good, captain; but wouldn't it be better to send the bullets at the rogues?"

"No, no, you bloodthirsty rogue. You'll get fighting enough yet, perhaps. Be off with you now, and see that you mind me to the letter."

"Of course, captain."

The little rogue dashed into the grove at full speed, and Molly then turned to her uncle, saying:

"Now, uncle, follow my instructions to the letter, or— But you know what I can do."

"My curses on Dick Graves! What am I to do, girl?"

"Order the troops to fall back."

The old squire obeyed the order, and the troops fell back.

The movement was scarcely effected when a bugle blast rang out from the road below, followed by the tramping of horses.

Molly turned to her friends, and gave a few hasty orders.

The brave girl gave signals to those in the house and in the grove at the same time.

The gags were again clapped on the mouths of the prisoners, the horsemen drew slowly back behind the house, and a general retreat was commenced on the part of the moonlighters.

Just as the party gained the edge of a wood the second party of horse-soldiers dashed into the lawn from the road.

Molly gave the signal by firing a pistol in the air, and then cried out to her followers:

"To the hills again, brave boys."

A loud yell was then heard from the grove on the right, followed by wild shouts and savage yells.

The officers appeared to be bewildered for a few moments, and

their voices were then heard giving orders to charge in front and flank.

Mocking shouts were heard from the wood in front, and the moonlighters rode on with their prisoners at a headlong pace until they gained the foot of the hill.

They were then joined by those who had created the diversion, and the whole party swept up the mountain path at the fullest speed, the active mountaineers on foot keeping ahead of the horsemen.

Among the last in the retreat was Molly, and close beside her was a tall young man wearing a mask.

The young man turned to look back as he remarked:

"That was a sharp piece of work, indeed, captain, and not a man lost. Ah, they are on our track now in full gallop and force."

Molly gazed back also as if to measure the distance, and remarked:

"Let them come, Mr. Barry. We can defy them on the hills."

"Then you must have a large force and a safe retreat."

"We have, if—what is the rumpus up there?"

"One of the prisoners is escaping. See!—he is dashing down the cliffs at a thundering speed. Hang me if it isn't Dick Graves!"

"What a reckless rascal!" exclaimed Molly, half in admiration and half in alarm. "I'm not cruel, but I almost wish he'd break his neck. The others dare not follow, but I will."

The reckless girl was about to dash across the rugged rocks to intercept the fugitive, when Clarence Barry spurred before her, crying:

"Hold back, and I'll take him!"

"Hold back yourself, as it is too late. Would that I had not given orders not to fire on him! Now he will lead the soldiers up to our rendezvous—the treacherous hound! Spur on, however, and we'll baffle them yet."

The daring girl then urged her horse up the mountain, and young Barry galloped after her as he asked:

"Have you but one hiding-place on the hills?"

"Only one up here, but there is another over on the other mountain. If poor Morris were well we would make a stand and fight."

"But can we reach the other before them?"

"Not with the prisoners, as they encumber us too much."

"Then why not let them go?"

"I must keep my uncle, at all hazards, and I must secure Dick Graves again," replied Molly, as she gazed back at the escaped prisoner, who had just joined the pursuers at the foot of the steep hill.

"I'll guarantee to take Graves again," said Clarence Barry. "But what is to be done with young Morris?"

"True, true," Molly said, with a deep sigh. "I forgot that he cannot be removed at present. We must fight them back, Mr. Barry."

"Do call me Clarence, cousin. Count me in for the fight. Where can we make the best stand?"

Molly called a halt and then replied:

"About a hundred yards above here. If we could only succeed in capturing Dick Graves, poor Morris would be safe."

"I'll capture him, or risk my neck in the attempt."

"How will you do it, Clarence?"

"I have a plan in my head. I see your men are all behind the rocks already. Let us get in also, and then I'll set out while you are keeping the soldiers in check."

CHAPTER VIII.

TRICKS ON THE MOUNTAIN.

When Dick Graves reached the soldiers in his daring flight, Captain Jarvis halted his force at the foot of the hill and drew the escaped man aside, saying:

"That was a brilliant dash from your enemies, Mr. Graves. Who commands the outlaws up there?"

"That is more than I can tell, Captain Jarvis, as they all wear black crapo over their faces; but we will soon find out, if you will follow my advice."

"What may that be?"

Dick Graves consulted with the officer in an undertone for some minutes, and the latter then gave the order to move up the mountain path on foot.

While the horse-soldiers were dismounting in haste, three horsemen rode down the path toward them; and when they were in hailing distance, Captain Jarvis called out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Friends!" was the response.

"Then advance and give an account of yourself," said the officer. As the horsemen drew near Dick Graves recognized them and exclaimed:

"'Tis young Barry and my two friends, Captain Jarvis."

"Yes, here we are, Captain Jarvis," cried Clarence Barry. "The moonlighters have released us, saying that we would be only an incumbrance to them in the coming fight with you."

"Then the rascals mean to fight?"

"That they do," answered Clarence Barry, "and they swear they will hang Squire Turner before your eyes if you advance to attack them."

"Can't help it, as I must do my duty. Who is the leader of the rascals, Mr. Barry?"

"It would be hard for me to tell, captain, as I did not see his face. He sent a message by me to Mr. Graves here, however."

"What is the message?" asked Dick Graves, as he drew near the young man. "Is it a private one?"

It is not very private. He told me to tell you that you are a marked man, and that twenty guns will be aimed at you if you attempt to lead the soldiers up to the rendezvous."

Dick Graves turned pale and trembled a little at the threat, but he soon blustered forth:

"Let the rascals take aim and be hanged to 'em. They can't hit me when surrounded by the soldiers here; and I am bound to rescue Squire Turner before they can harm him."

"The leader of the band up there," continued Clarence Barry, "said that you are a traitor to them, and every man of them has sworn to take your life as soon as possible."

"That is true, Dick," said one of the sportsman's friends. "If you will take my advice, you won't go up there."

Dick Graves faltered in his resolution, and he looked at Captain Jarvis as he remarked:

"Had you not better defer the attack until daylight, captain? I can assure you the rascals hold a strong position."

"Were it as strong as the Rocks of Gibraltar I'll march to the attack on the instant," cried the gallant officer. "Let the civilians who falter fall back. Mr. Graves, you have just volunteered to lead us to the rebels' rendezvous. If you fear to advance with us, we—"

"Who said I was afraid?" cried the double-faced rascal. "Lead on, and I will show you the way to their hiding-place. My word on it, but you will bag nice game there."

His two friends declined to advance up with the troops, as one of them said:

"The moonlighters released us on our promise that we would not fight against them to-night, and we must keep our words."

"I made no such promise," said Clarence Barry, "and I will up with you to the rescue of my uncle."

The troops were soon in motion up the hill, with several skirmishers in advance, and feeling their way along the rough mountain sides.

Dick Graves and Clarence Barry were the last in the rear, and as they were nearing the top of the mountain the latter said to his rival:

"See here, Graves, why shouldn't we settle this business about the gray mare at once and be done with it?"

"How can we settle it?"

"If you take my advice, you will not proceed any further with the soldiers, as you are certain to be the first to get a bullet or so in your body. Let us draw aside to that sheltered ledge and have it out about the mare. You pride yourself on being a great boxer, I believe?"

"Do you mean to say you will fight me with the fists for the mare?" asked Graves, who prided himself on being the best boxer in the country.

"That's what I mean. There's no use in our wasting time and money with the law when we can settle it ourselves. If you best me I pledge you my word the mare is yours."

"I'd like to add a couple of hundred pounds to the stake."

"I'll take the offer and book it," said Clarence, as he pulled up his horse and drew out his note-book. "Draw in here under the rocks and let the soldiers fight it out for the old squire."

Dick Graves was not anxious to face the bullets of the moonlighters, and he felt certain that he could easily defeat Clarence Barry in a pugilistic encounter; so he drew his horse in on the ledge of rocks after his challenger, as he remarked:

"It won't take me long to best you, in any case, and I can then hasten to the rescue of the squire. But we should have a witness to the fight."

"Take me as a witness," cried a merry voice, as Molly darted out from behind a huge rock on the gray mare. "Here's the mare, and I'll hold the money."

The wild girl was dressed in a riding-habit hat, and her long curls were falling in disorder over her shoulders, while her beautiful face was glowing with excitement and exercise.

On turning from the mountain path the two sporting rivals were shut out from the view of the soldiers above by a range of shelving rocks, and the ledge on which they were moving led along for some distance.

When Molly darted out on the gallant gray mare she kept on ahead of them, as if perfectly familiar with the locality, while she addressed her admirers, saying:

"I escaped from the moonlighters with the mare, and I was getting down again by yonder path, when I saw the soldiers marching up. As I didn't care to meet them, I turned in here."

Recovering from his surprise at the unexpected meeting, Graves followed on after the girl, as he asked:

"How did you manage to change your costume, Miss Molly?"

"Why, I always keep a change up at the hunting lodge. And so you are going to fight for the mare? Thank my stars that I am here to see it, and I will lead you to a nice quiet spot for the encounter. Cousin Clarence, you will have to fight like a Trojan to win, as Mr. Graves is a splendid boxer."

Clarence gave vent to a merry laugh, and then cried:

"I only wish you were another Helen of Troy, Cousin Molly, and that we were to fight for you now."

"I wish we were, with all my heart," cried Dick Graves, as he cast admiring glances at the fair rider before him, "and then you would all see how quick I would win the fairest lady in Ireland."

"Brag was never a good dog," cried Molly, "and I will bet on my Cousin Clarence."

"You dare not offer yourself as the prize?" cried Dick Graves. "Don't insult the lady, or we will use pistols instead of fists," cried Clarence, in angry tones.

"Keep your temper for the fight, good cousin," cried Molly. "Here's the nicest spot in the world for it."

As the dashing creature spoke she sprang from the mare and pointed to a green, level space extending in from the ledge, and which was completely hidden from above by the overhanging rocks, while the sides were also screened by huge and moss-covered bowlders.

The young men sprang from their horses also, as Molly pointed to a withered tree, saying:

"Tie your horses there and have it out at once. In the language of the ring, may the best man win. Hallo! they are at it above us."

A sharp volley rang out from the mountain top at the moment, followed by shouts and yells.

The rivals paused to listen as they were securing their horses to the stunted tree, but the impatient girl cried:

"Hurry and settle your trouble, as I want to see the fun above."

Dick Graves flung off his coat and stepped out into the center of the level space, crying:

"I am ready for him, as I am anxious to hasten up to the rescue of the old squire, Miss Molly."

Clarence Barry was soon facing his rival, as he said:

"I am ready also, Graves. Remember, we fight for two hundred pounds and the gray mare."

"That's the ticket. Miss Molly, you are the sole judge."

"Then at it with you, as I want to see the fun above," cried the lively girl, while scattering shots were heard from the top of the mountain.

Dick Graves led off on the instant, planking a blow on the breast of his opponent that sent him staggering backward with some force.

Following up his advantage, the traitor let fly for the young man's eyes, as he yelled, in jubilant tones:

"I told you I'd make short work of it, Barry. Thunder!"

The last expression was forced from the lips of the bully as he received a stunner between the eyes, while the delighted girl cried:

"Glory for my brave cousin! Master Graves, I told you Brag was never a good dog. How do you like that? First knock-down for Cousin Clarence."

Dick Graves was down, indeed, and he was senseless as well.

Following up his rival with tremendous vigor, Clarence Barry dealt him a blow under the ear, and down he went.

"Time!" cried Molly, as she stared down at the fallen man.

Clarence drew back with his hands up to await his rival's recovery, but the latter did not show any signs of life.

Springing to the side of the fallen man in some alarm, Molly cried:

"I fear you killed the man, good cousin. No, no! The traitor is only insensible, and it is all the better. Now he is in my power."

The young girl then drew a small whistle, and sent forth a signal.

The sound had scarcely died out over the mountains when over a dozen men, wearing crape over their faces, dashed out from the rocks.

"In with that fellow, and blindfold him," ordered Molly, clapping a mask on her own face ere the man could see her, and flinging aside her riding-habit and tucking up her hair almost at the same moment.

When the men were taking the insensible prisoner away, Molly turned to Clarence, saying:

"You are a noble man, and I will be your friend forever; but remember that you are my prisoner for the present."

"I would like to be your prisoner forever, dear cousin."

"None of that, sirrah. I will never listen to a word of love until all the tyrants are banished from Ireland. Now, follow me."

When Dick Graves opened his eyes again he found himself in a large cave, and with his arms and legs bound.

"Do you know where you are now?" asked a harsh voice, as a masked figure appeared before him.

Dick Graves glanced around the cavern, and a deadly shudder passed over his frame as he answered, in tremulous tones:

"I am in the rendezvous on the hill, I think. Oh, do spare my life, and I will explain everything."

"Yes, you are in the cave on the hill, and Captain Jarvis and his men are marching down again," said the masked leader. "You can now tell me the secret you hold over Squire Turner."

"Where is Miss Molly and young Barry?" asked the prisoner.

"They are my prisoners also. Out with the secret or over the cliff you go. I am in no humor for any humbugging at present."

CHAPTER IX.

WORKING ON THE SECRET.

Squire Turner returned to his mansion on the following morning, and all the servants were astonished at the change in his manner.

The domestic tyrant was as meek as a mouse, his harsh tones were no longer heard, and he bore himself like one who feared some secret disaster at every turn.

His lively niece returned to the mansion during the evening, and

she was at once installed as mistress of the house, as the meek squire announced that her word would be law thereafter.

On the following day the tenants of the estate received notice that large reductions would be made in their rents; several of those evicted were told to return to their holdings; and a general era of peace and prosperity appeared to dawn on all connected with the squire.

On the night after the skirmish on the mountain a carriage drove up to the mansion, and a sick man was borne therefrom into one of the best bedrooms on the second floor.

That sick man was the squire's only son; and it was at once rumored around that he had received a wound in a late duel in Paris.

Clarence Barry was a regular visitor at the Coolmain House, and the young man soon became a general favorite with all, and especially with Molly.

Dick Graves was among the missing after that night, and it was said that he had been made away with by the moonlighters on the mountains.

Captain Jarvis marched a strong force up to the hill on the following day, and the active officer made a thorough search for the rendezvous of the outlaws, but he did not meet with any success.

One evening, about a week after the attack upon the mansion, Molly was seated in the library with her uncle, and the old squire appeared to be in a brown study.

The young girl watched him for some moments in silence, while she muttered to herself:

"The old tyrant is thinking of kicking in the traces, if he dared. I don't like the way he is acting for the last couple of days."

Speaking in cheerful tones, Molly then addressed the squire, saying:

"Don't you feel a great deal happier than you did, uncle?"

"I don't, you infernal witch," was the blunt reply. "The mischief take you, but I wish I were dead."

"That is sheer folly, good uncle. Just look at your life now and what it was before. You should be the happiest man in Ireland to-day."

"I would be if I saw you lying dead before me, and my secret dead with you. Curse that cowardly Graves!"

"Dick Graves is where he won't heed your curses now, uncle."

"Are you certain that he is dead?"

"Didn't I see his dead body? People don't come to life nowadays, with all our modern improvements. Do you regret his death, sir?"

"Yes, I do. He was a rascal; only he would be able for you, bold and clever as you are, girl. Besides, you don't hold any dread secret of his to keep him under, as you crush me."

"Don't be too sure of that. He was rascal enough for any crime, goodness knows."

"You'll be hung for his murder yet, when I am dead. You are driving me to sheer desperation, wicked girl; and before you know where you are I will expose you and then put an end to my own life."

A merry laugh burst from Molly ere she retorted:

"You have a great notion of it, indeed, good uncle. Why, you will be heaping blessings on me ere long."

"I'd like to heap coals of fire on you, you wicked hussy. Are you going to marry Clarence Barry?"

"What put that into your head, sir?"

"Why, you are so thick with the hateful young rascal now."

"He is my cousin, and he is a noble young man. He is going to run for parliament, and you will support him."

"Support a Parnellite! I will cut my throat first."

"You will not, uncle. Your son is going to parliament also."

"The mischief he is! Why don't you clap on your men's clothes and run for parliament yourself, you brazen creature?"

"I would, dear uncle, only that I am too busy in dealing with the wicked landlords around here. The boys on the mountain would not get along very well without their leader."

"Hang all the rascals! Oh, I'd give all I owe to see Dick Graves alive again, and then we would hang you all in earnest!"

"No fear of that, uncle. Would you like to see your son and your dear niece dangling on the gallows?"

"That I would! Oh, how I would dance with joy at the sight!"

Molly arose from the chair with another merry laugh, and then said:

"You will soon get civilized, my dear uncle, and then you will say that I am the best girl in the world. Now I must be off on a tramp."

"Where are you going to-night?"

"We are going to deal with a certain neighbor of yours."

"I only hope he'll pepper you in the attack, confound you."

"I must take my chances, uncle. Oh, how you would weep for me."

"In my eye I would. See here, girl."

"What is it, sir?"

"Marry my son, lead an honest life with him, and I will forgive you all."

"Not I! I'll never marry until Ireland is free. Good-night, and peace be with you, dear uncle."

The lively girl ran out of the library humming a melody, while the crushed man covered his face with his hands, as he groaned to himself:

"Oh, this is fearful! I'd be the willing slave of any one who would rescue me from this infernal bondage."

The distressed squire was aroused from his fit of depression by

hearing a slight tap at the window behind him, and he sprang from the chair on the instant, saying:

"Who's there?"

"Hush—it is I!" answered a well-known voice in cautious tones.

The old squire started back in alarm, as he gasped forth:

"Heavens alive, it is his ghost!"

A ghastly face, covered with a week's growth of beard, appeared at the window at the moment, while a voice made answer:

"I am not a ghost, squire, but I am nearly dead. Can I come in? Will you be alone long?"

The startled squire kept gazing at the ghastly face, as he moved to the door and turned the key in the lock, while he said in a whisper:

"Come in, if you are not a ghost. I was certain you were dead."

The words were scarcely spoken when Dick Graves glided into the room and sank on a chair, as he gasped forth:

"Some brandy."

The old squire seized the man's hand, as if to assure himself that he was not dealing with a spirit from the other world, and then hastened to the side-board, as he muttered to himself:

"It is Dick Graves! Oh, how can I use him without exposing my son and Molly?"

The weak man swallowed a bumper of brandy with great relish, while he kept his eyes fixed on the old squire, as if eager to read his inmost thoughts.

When the liquor had revived him, he addressed his old tool, saying:

"What has happened? Did they use the secret against you?"

"That they did—hang you! Oh, you are a false dog!"

"You would be a false dog also, squire, if you had a rope around your neck and swinging from the highest cliff on the mountain. Oh, what I suffered! But you are not exposed."

"Not exactly, but I am crushed to the very earth. Who did you tell my dread secret to, Graves?"

"To the captain of the moonlighters."

"Who is he?"

"I can't tell, as he was masked, but your son can if he is alive."

"My son is alive, and he is in this house now. How was it that I saw you lying as if dead up on the mountain?"

"I thought I was dead myself, but I was only drugged. I escaped from the cave to-night."

Footsteps were heard outside the door at the moment, a hand was laid on the knob, and then Molly's voice rang out as she cried:

"Why do you lock the door, uncle? Open, as I have something to say to you."

Being all in a tremor, the old squire drew Dick Graves toward a large closet as he whispered to him:

"Hide in there or you are lost. Molly is friends with the rascals above."

The pale-faced man darted into the closet as he replied:

"Yes, yes, she is in with the rascals, and she will suffer for it. Don't betray me, or—"

"Open, or I will burst the door in, uncle," cried Molly. "Who have you got in there with you?"

The impatient girl drew a revolver from her pocket and looked around, as she replied:

"I want the man who was just drinking your brandy, uncle. A thief cannot steal in here while you are asleep, if I can help it."

CHAPTER X.

MOLLY IN HOT WATER.

The old squire felt that he was in a fearful hobble should Molly discover Dick Graves in his place of concealment, and he also dreaded the exposure that would follow any unguarded words dropped by the reckless girl.

Much as the old man denounced his niece to her face, and seemingly harsh as had been her treatment of him, he still loved the wild girl above everything on earth.

While he could denounce her himself with an unsparing tongue, he would prefer death to an exposure of the fact that she was the daring leader of the moonlighters of the mountain.

Then there was his own son to think of as well; and, much as he blamed that son, Squire Turner was not prepared to be the instrument in bringing him to punishment as an outlaw.

Then how was he to deal with Molly at that critical moment without betraying either Dick Graves or herself?

A point-blank denial of the presence of any stranger was his only resources, as far as he could see, and he at once said:

"What is the trouble with you, mad girl? If you keep on in this way, I will have to clap you in the madhouse."

Molly was staring around the room and at the open window as she rejoined:

"Do you mean to say that there was no one in here with you just now, uncle?"

"Of course, I do."

"Then why did you lock the door?"

"To keep you out. I am sick and tired of your intrusions."

"Oh, you old rogue! You know in your heart that you are telling fibs. Let us see who's in here."

As Molly spoke she darted at the closet and opened it, holding the pistol pointed inward, as she cried:

"Whoever you are, come out here and show yourself, as I am mistress of this house at present. Pshaw—there is no one in there after all."

To Molly's disgust and the great surprise of her uncle, the closet did not contain a human being at the moment.

"That is wonderful!" muttered the old fellow to himself. "It was almost impossible for him to escape by the window while Molly was bursting in the door."

After assuring herself that no one was concealed in the closet, the lively girl searched behind the book-case and other nooks, until she felt assured that the intruder had escaped by the window.

She then turned suddenly on her uncle and grasped his arm as she whispered:

"I know who was in here, but he can't escape. If you assist in hiding Dick Graves and he escapes, you will weep bitter tears of sorrow."

"Dick Graves!" gasped the old squire in apparent surprise, and speaking also in whispered tones. "Did you not assure me that he was dead?"

"So he was, but he came to life again, and he is about here now."

"Then you are lost, Molly. He will be sure to denounce you."

"He can't do it, but he can expose your son. However, never fear, but we will take him again. All the roads are guarded by my men, and he cannot even get to the nearest barracks."

"Will you kill him if you take him?"

"What nonsense, uncle. We never shed blood when we can work our points by other means. No! We will take sly Dick out, keep him safe until we find means to tame him effectually. Where is he, and no more humbugging?"

"Mad girl, do you suppose that I would be mean enough to give him up, even if I knew where he was?"

"He is mean enough to play the basest kind of a trick on you and yours. However, uncle, I respect you for your keen sense of honor. Old as you are, we will make a patriot out of you yet. I will find Dick without your aid, as he must not denounce your son."

"He swore to me that he would do nothing of the kind."

"And he broke his oath, as he was leading Captain Jarvis up to show him poor Morris' hiding-place that night. He is a traitor of the deepest dye, and he will be the ruin of you and yours if I don't baffle him."

"Mercy on me, girl, what a fix I am in between you all."

"I don't wish to upbraid you, uncle, but you should remember that it is all your own doing."

The old squire's only reply was a sigh and a groan.

"Well, well," continued Molly, with a pitying smile, "I don't want to add to your anguish, but to save you from more, if possible. Dick Graves is your evil genius, and we must put him down. I was about to ride to the mountain, but I will remain here now to watch for him. He can't escape from the house, as my friends guard it on all sides."

"Are you certain he came here?"

"I am. He was tracked to the stable-yard. I am also certain that he was in this room with you ere I entered. I can't ask you to betray him, but I do warn you, again and again, to beware of him."

Having thus spoken, the keen-witted girl turned and left the library.

The old squire closed the door after her and flung himself on his easy-chair again, as he groaned forth:

"Death alone will ease my anguish! Oh, where can he be hiding?"

"Where I will never be found, if you do not betray me," answered a very faint voice from the closet.

The old squire sprang to the window and closed it, pulling down the blinds at the same time.

He then placed a heavy chair against the door before returning to the closet, which, to his great surprise, was still empty.

"Where are you?" he gasped, as he closed the closet door on himself.

"I am hiding in a secret passage leading from the closet," answered Dick Graves, in very subdued tones.

"Ah, you infernal rogue, I now know how you played the spy on me. Where does the passage lead to?"

"That is no matter now, squire. That was Miss Molly with you?"

"What of it?"

"Why did she burst in the door?"

"Because she took you for a robber, and she was half right."

"Equire Turner, take care of yourself, and don't turn me against you. I heard enough just now."

"What did you hear, you infernal hound of a spy?"

"I heard enough to tell me that Miss Molly is hand and glove with the fiends of the mountain who seek my life. She wants to give me up to them."

"And it would be all the better for me if she did," hissed the old squire in bitter tones.

"If that is your game now, let me tell you that I defy you all. I can escape from here to the town in spite of all the moonlighters in the country, and then we'll see who'll suffer."

The old squire gave a mental groan and then replied:

"You are a treacherous and ungrateful rascal, and I am an old fool to offer to stand by you."

"You can't help yourself. Have a little common sense and all will be well yet. Now I'll compel her to marry me after all. All you have got to do then is to turn your rebellious son off to America and make my wife your mistress."

"She'd die before she'd ever have you, as I am sure she is dead in love with Clarence Barry."

"So much the worse for him!" hissed Dick Graves from his hiding-place. "I had enough against the young cur before, but the mischief won't save him from death now, you may be sure."

Another groan burst from the tortured old man as he heard loud knocking on the door of the library, followed by the voice of Molly, crying:

"Let me in, uncle, as we are in a bad fix now."

"Don't betray me, on your life," whispered Dick Graves, "and get out to her."

The old squire stole out of the closet and closed it quietly after him, crying:

"What in the fury is the matter now, you mad girl?"

"Trouble enough, sir," answered Molly, bursting in the door again. "Captain Jarvis and a large force of mounted soldiers are riding up here at full gallop."

"Well, what is that to me?"

"A matter of life or death, maybe. If your son is taken, I'll never forgive you again. Where is Dick Graves, till I silence him before he can do any more of his mischief?"

"I tell you I don't know where he is, girl. Oh, was ever a man in such hot water as I am?"

"'Tis I am in the hottest kind of water between you all. Quick, and tell me where he is, before deadly ruin falls on your house."

"I can't, girl."

"Then look to your son yourself, as I will wash my hands clear of you all. Captain Jarvis is at the door now."

The tramping of horses and the jingling of arms were heard outside at the moment, followed by a loud ringing at the door-bell.

The old squire caught Molly by the arm as she was about to retire from the library, as he pleaded:

"In mercy's sake, don't desert me in my trouble, Molly. I feel as if some heavy blow were about to fall on me."

"Then meet it like a man, and I will stand by you. You must save your own flesh and blood."

"I will, I will, Molly. What am I to do with Captain Jarvis?"

"Go meet him in the drawing-room and I will go with you. Deny everything about Morris."

They both spoke in subdued tones, but the keen-eared listener behind the closet caught some of the words.

As the agitated squire was leaving the library to meet his unwelcome guest, Molly pushed him ahead of her in the hall as she whispered into his ear:

"I will be there with you in a moment, when I arrange my dress."

Captain Jarvis was in the drawing-room when the old squire entered, and the young soldier at once said:

"You will pardon this intrusion, Squire Turner, but we have just received private information that your house is to be attacked by the moonlighters to-night."

"Attacked to-night by the moonlighters!" gasped the perplexed man.

"So I am assured, sir. Several parties of the rascals were seen hastening down the mountain in this direction this evening, and I believe they are now lying in wait close by. It will be advisable to prepare for them by garrisoning the place in force."

"Of course, Captain Jarvis, if you think it advisable, yet I was almost assured that the rascals would not attempt to molest me again."

"You can never trust the rebellious dogs, squire," said the young Englishman; "and it was a mistake on your part to make any terms with your tenants. The only way to govern the country is to drive all the infernal Irish out of it at the point of the bayonet, I say."

While the perplexed squire was thus conversing with an average specimen of the English rulers in Ireland, Molly had stolen quietly back into the library, as she muttered to herself:

"Dick Graves is hiding in here somewhere, and I must get at him before he can communicate with the soldiers and betray poor Morris. It is too bad they let the rascal escape, when all was going on so well. Uncle talks about being in hot water, but I feel as if I were in a pot of burning lava at this moment."

The unselfish girl flung herself on the easy-chair and pressed her hands to her throbbing forehead, as if to collect or clear her thoughts for the occasion, when a strong hand was suddenly laid on her shoulder, while a hateful voice hissed into her ear:

"Be quiet, Miss Molly, and don't raise a row, or there will be the mischief to play with your friends. I want a few quiet words with you."

Molly was a little surprised at being thus silently approached by the man whom she feared and hated at the time, but the versatile creature soon regained her presence of mind, and turned on Dick Graves with an exclamation of surprise and alarm, as she gasped forth:

"You here! Why, they told us that you were dead, and you do look very much like a corpse, indeed."

"There's life enough in me yet for a good deal of mischief, Miss Molly," answered the rascal, with a malicious grin, "as you will know that I will not have it from you."

"None of your bullying with me, Master Dick Graves, as you find out to your cost if you do not treat me as I desire."

"Perhaps you would like me to call in Captain Jarvis, to hear what I have to say to you?"

"Call him in if you like, or let us go out to him. Whatever you have to say to me, I am not afraid if all the world heard it, sir."

"You don't mean that, Miss Molly. What if I should say that your Cousin Morris is the leader of the Moonlighters?"

"You would tell a great lie, which is not anything new for you."

"You are very pert; but I will soon bring you to your senses. What if I were to prove that you are also hand and glove with the outlaws of the mountain?"

"You would be scoffed and laughed at for your pains, and I would horsewhip you in public as well."

"Not if you were safe in prison. Besides, what is to hinder me from denouncing your dear uncle on a certain terrible charge that your Cousin Morris may have told you about?"

"What would hinder me from blowing your brains out this very instant, you infamous hound?" demanded the daring girl, as she suddenly drew a revolver and pointed it full at the fellow's face, while her glorious eyes flashed with a deadly fire.

Dick Graves sank behind the chair on the instant and held his hands before his face, as he gasped forth in the most cowardly tones:

"Gracious, gracious, Miss Molly, don't fire, as I was only joking. I won't think of calling on Captain Jarvis and the soldiers at all. Let us settle our trouble as friends, you know."

"You may be jesting, Master Graves, but I am in deadly earnest. At the least sign of treachery on your part you die!"

"On my honor, I did not dream of treachery to you, Miss Molly, but I have been treated in a horrible manner by young Morris and his friends."

"Not half as bad as I'll treat you, if you don't mind me. Now, take a scat there, and tell me the truth."

CHAPTER XI.

MOLLY IN HOT WATER.

Although standing, as it were, on the brink of a volcano, Molly was as calm as the breeze on a summer day while dealing with Dick Graves.

Having cowed the rascal with the revolver, she pointed to the easy-chair, as she commanded:

"Sit down there, and let me hear what you have to say. Remember, if you raise the slightest alarm, I will fire, and then swear that I took you for a prowling robber."

The cowardly rascal glided into the chair, as he responded: "No fear that I will raise any alarm, Miss Molly. On my honor, I only mean to serve you and yours."

"Stop your lies, as I know better. Where were you hiding?" Dick Graves pointed to the window, as he replied:

"Out there under the honeysuckle. Do put away your pistol, Miss Molly, as it may go off, you know."

"No fear of that, if you behave yourself, sir. Wouldn't you like to pounce on me now and then call in the soldiers?"

"I wouldn't do it for the world, as I adore you, Miss Molly."

"Stop that kind of talk or I'll fire. I told you before that I would sooner marry a beggarman than you, and I have not changed my mind. What did you say to my uncle?"

"I charged that it was his son who had so ill-used me on the mountain, which is the truth."

"Which is a lie, as Morris was lying helplessly wounded when you marched the soldiers up there to betray him."

"Then it was Clarence Barry who had me nearly strangled up there. Can you blame me for being angry?"

"I blame you for being a traitor to your sworn friends. Clarence Barry won the mare from you in a fair fight, but beware how you accuse him of being out with the moonlighters."

"I have my strong suspicions, and I may be able to prove them. What are you going to do with me now?"

Dick Graves was getting a little defiant as he heard the heavy tramp of the armed men moving through the house.

Still keeping her weapon pointed at his head, Molly moved the chair to the door again as she responded:

"That depends on how you behave yourself, you brazen rascal. Who is that knocking out there?"

"It is me, Miss Molly," answered a feminine voice outside the door.

"I'm glad it is Norry," said Molly, as she drew the chair away in haste. "Come in and shut the door quick."

The young woman's waiting-maid hastened in on the instant, and cast a look of alarm at the prisoner, ere she said in a whisper:

"We are in awful trouble above, as Master Morris is in dread the soldiers are after him. How did that villain get in here, Miss Molly?"

"Never mind now, Norry, but help me to keep him silent."

"My good girl," pleaded the prisoner, "bear honest witness that Miss Molly is threatening to blow my brains out."

"'Tis a murdering pity that some one didn't do it long ago," answered Norry, as she shook her clenched fist in his face. "Oh, but it's I'd like to have your death alone on my conscience on my dying day."

"Take your handkerchief and tie it fast around his mouth, Norry," said Molly, as she still kept aim at his head.

Norry went to work in a twinkling, but before the job was completed the door was shoved in again, and the old squire stepped into the library, saying, as he stared at the prisoner:

"What in the mischief is all this now, you pair of madcaps?"

"Oh, squire, don't let them murder me," cried Dick Graves, as he tore the handkerchief from his mouth and sprang up from the chair.

Molly closed the door again and kept the pistol at his head, as she said, in cold, determined tones:

"Utter a loud word, and all the redcoats in Ireland won't save you. Keep your back to the door, Norry, and don't let any one else in."

The squire stared from his niece to her trembling prisoner as he asked:

"What is this all about, anyway? Where did you come from, Graves?"

"From the grave, of course," answered Molly; "where he will soon be again if he don't behave himself."

"Put the pistol away, Miss Molly, and I swear to keep as quiet as a mouse. This is all a great mistake."

"It would be if I didn't watch you like a cat. Are the soldiers going to remain here, uncle?"

"They are, for the whole night," groaned the squire. "Oh, if I am not in a nice hobble with you all."

As if to add to the old man's terror, a knock was heard at the door at the moment, and then Captain Jarvis was heard outside, crying:

"I desire to see you, squire."

Still aiming the pistol at the prisoner's head Molly sprang to the closed door, crying:

"The squire is not in here, Captain Jarvis. I will see you in the drawing-room in a few moments."

"I will be delighted, Miss Molly," answered the gallant captain, "but I have disagreeable news for the squire."

"Pray, what is it, sir?"

"We have been compelled to arrest his son upstairs."

"Arrest my Cousin Morris! And what for, Captain Jarvis?"

"He is accused of being the leader of the moonlighters, Miss Molly, I regret to say. Where can the squire be?"

The ready-witted girl pointed to the window, as she whispered to her uncle:

"Out with you, and pretend that you were out in the stables."

Then, speaking aloud, she cried:

"My maid informs me that she saw my uncle out near the stables a few moments ago, sir. Please retire to the drawing-room, and I will see you in a very few moments."

"To be sure, Miss Molly; I am always your most devoted," cried the gallant captain, as he retreated to the drawing-room.

"I wish you were in Limbo, you puppy," muttered Molly, "but I'll humbug you yet. Now, Norry, take this pistol, and shoot that rascal if he attempts to speak aloud or move. Out with you, uncle, and not another word."

In less than five minutes after the ready-witted girl appeared in the drawing-room before the gay soldier and her uncle, and there was a playful smile on her beautiful face as she remarked:

"What practical joke is this you are playing on us, captain? You spoke about the arrest of my cousin?"

"It is no joke, I assure you, my dear Miss Molly. It is with deep pain I have to state that I have been compelled to arrest the young gentleman."

"On what charge, pray?"

"He is accused of being the leader of the moonlighters."

"How ridiculous! Why, my poor cousin has just returned from France, where he was wounded in a duel."

"We have information that he has not been out of Ireland, Miss Molly, and that he received the wound in a skirmish with the police officers."

"For goodness sake, captain, who gave you such silly information?"

"I cannot tell you at present, my dear young lady, but I assure you the warrant for his arrest is in due form. As he is too ill to remove him, it— Mercy on me, what is that?"

"The loud report of a pistol rang out from the library at the moment; and then the voice of the servant girl was heard in the hall, as she yelled aloud, in the most terrified tones:

"Murder!—robbers! The villain offered to kill me."

The gallant captain dashed out into the hall, followed by Molly and the old squire, the latter crying:

"Oh, I'll drop dead with all the trouble of this night."

"Courage and silence," whispered Molly, as she grasped his arm, "and I'll see that all is right yet."

CHAPTER XII.

MORE PERPLEXING THAN EVER.

Dick Graves was scarcely left alone in the library with Norry before he commenced cajoling the simple girl by saying:

"Now, look you, my dear girl, I can put you in the way of riding in your own coach before long. You know I was always fond of you, Norry."

"The mischief take your impudence, but 'tis your fondness I don't want, Master Graves," replied the girl, as she pointed the weapon at him. "Shure it is the dark sorrow you brought on those I care for."

"You mean young Morris?"

"To be sure. The dear young man is in the hands of the redcoats now, and he is not able to stir."

"Do as I tell you, Norry, and I'll swear to set him free, and I'll make him marry you in the bargain."

"I wouldn't have the Prince of Wales himself if he was forced to marry me, and poor Master Morris is not thinking of marriage now. Keep still, or I'll shoot."

"You wouldn't have the heart to take my life in cold blood, Norry?"

"I'll do as the young mistress tells me, and no mistake."

"The mischief you will!" cried the cunning rascal, as he made a dart on the girl and seized the hand that held the pistol. "Now I am your master."

Norry was taken a little by surprise, but she made a violent effort to free herself from his grasp, and in the struggle the revolver went off.

Falling flat on the floor and pressing his hand to his breast, Dick Graves moaned forth:

"You have killed me, girl, and you'll be hung for it."

Mindful of Molly's instructions, the half-distracted creature dashed out into the hallway, holding the smoking weapon in her hand as she yelled aloud.

"What is the infernal row?" cried Captain Jarvis, as he drew his sword and sprang to the girl's side.

Pointing to the library, the agitated girl gasped forth:

"I shot the villain to save my own life, good captain, but I didn't mean to do it at all, at all."

The captain dashed into the library on the instant, followed by Molly and some of the soldiers, the former crying:

"There's no one in here, by Jove."

"Then the rascal must have escaped by the window," cried Molly. "Are you sure you hit him, Norry?"

"Didn't I see him lying stretched there dying," cried the girl, "after the pistol went off in the scuffle?"

The officer sprang to the window and looked out, crying: "Soldier on guard, did anyone escape out of this window?"

"No, no, sir," was the ready response from the sentinel outside. "I heard the shot in there, and I was on the alert, but no one appeared at the window."

Molly turned to her uncle, who had just entered the library, and she whispered into his ear:

"You know where the rascal is hiding, but don't tell now."

"Egad, but this is strange," said Captain Jarvis, as he stared around the room and into the open closet. "Are you quite certain you shot the fellow, girl?"

"I'm certain that the pistol went off, and that he dropped on the floor with a moan, sir."

"Did you know the rascal?"

"Not I, sir; but he looked like a born villain, if ever there was one in this world."

The officer looked at the pistol in the girl's hand, as he asked: "Do you always carry such toys?"

"Not I, sir; but Miss Molly there gave me this awhile ago, saying that I might require it while the red-coats were in the house."

"Is that correct, Miss Molly?" asked the gay officer, with a frown.

"It is, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Then you must entertain a very poor opinion of the honor of English soldiers, young lady?"

"I do, Captain Jarvis, as I have read the history of my unfortunate country, not to speak of their exploits in America, Spain, and other lands."

"I am sorry you look on them as worse than other soldiers, Miss Molly, and if you were a man I might quarrel with you for your free expressions."

"Would that I were a man, captain, and 'tis out on the hills of Ireland I'd be to-day."

"Molly, you will get into trouble," remonstrated her uncle, as he drew her aside, and then whispered:

"Do you know who it was Norry shot at, you mad girl?"

"It must have been Dick Graves, uncle, and it perplexes me to know where the rascal is hiding."

The old squire hesitated a few moments, and then said, with a sigh:

"The whole unfortunate business is very perplexing. I wish to goodness you could think of some plan for setting poor Morris free. Will you try?"

"Of course, sir."

The young girl then turned to Captain Jarvis with a bright smile, saying:

"Will it be necessary to remove my wounded cousin at the present time, sir?"

A sly smile appeared on the soldier's face as he answered:

"If I were such a brute as I get credit for I would insist, Miss Molly. As it is, we can keep the young gentleman under guard here for the present. Who can have attacked this young woman?"

And the officer bent his keen eyes on Norry as he asked the question.

The true-hearted girl could only answer by saying:

"He was a born villain, sir!"

"Would you know him again?"

"To be sure, sir."

"Then you can tell me if he was in uniform or not?"

Molly saw that her humble friend was getting bewildered by the officer's questions, and she hastened to her assistance again by saying:

"I can imagine that my maid was so alarmed that she cannot give a very clear account of the affair, captain. If the rascal is wounded he cannot have escaped very far, and he will be found."

Although not at all satisfied at the explanation of the mysterious affair, Captain Jarvis gave orders for a thorough search of the premises, and then hastened from the library to superintend the movements of the soldiers.

Molly then addressed her uncle again in whispers, saying: "You know where the scoundrel is hiding now, sir."

"You saw Graves, then, Molly?"

"I did. He was in this apartment not ten minutes ago, and I left him here as a prisoner with Norry. I am not bloodthirsty, but I only hope she has put an end to him."

In the meantime the keen-witted girl was examining the closet, and the trembling Norry was watching her, as she asked:

"Oh, Miss Molly, darling, do you think I have his blood on my hands?"

"Not you, Norry. Here's where the ball from the pistol struck."

And Molly pointed to the mark of a small bullet in the door of the closet.

The squire saw it also, and a sigh of relief escaped from him, while he mentally thought:

"The fellow didn't get hit after all; but what in the mischief can he be driving at now, keeping in his hiding-place?"

"There's a secret way from this closet, uncle," said Molly, in low tones, as she bent her keen eyes on the old squire, "and I will find it before long."

Before she could say any more Captain Jarvis entered again, saying:

"We cannot find any trace of the rascal the girl fired at, but I imagine it must have been one of the moonlighters prowling around."

There was a slight commotion in the hallway at the moment, and a soldier then appeared at the door of the library, saying:

"We have taken a prisoner on the hillside, captain."

"And I am that prisoner, Captain Jarvis," cried a manly voice from the hallway. "It has come to a pretty pass if a gentleman cannot ride abroad in the evening without being arrested."

"Clarence Barry!" gasped Molly to herself. "Oh, I do trust he was not caught leading the boys."

Captain Jarvis went out in the hallway to hear the particulars of the young man's arrest, and the old squire followed after him, muttering to himself:

"Molly will be the next. If Dick Graves only knew what I do."

Molly remained in the library with Norry, to whom she whispered:

"Give me the pistol and steal out to see Phil Murray in the stable. Tell him to summon all the lads to the foot of the hill. If I mistake not, we'll have warm work to-night. We must rescue Mr. Barry and the young master."

The faithful maid-servant hastened away on her mission, and Molly went out to learn about her young friend's arrest by the soldiers.

Clarence Barry had been caught on the hillside while riding with some of the moonlighters, and Captain Jarvis concluded to hold him as a prisoner.

Molly then retired to her own bedroom, where she was soon after joined by Norry, who said:

"The boys on the hill will get the word, Miss Molly, and they will be ready for the work in an hour or so, Phil Murray says. Sure, you won't think of leading them against the soldiers yourself, my darling?"

"But I will, if we cannot rescue our friends by stratagem. I'd give the world to know where that scoundrel is hiding, Norry."

"What good would it do, miss?"

"A great deal. He is hiding somewhere in the house planning more mischief, and I must find him."

"Does the squire know where the villain is hiding, miss?"

"I think he does; but he fears that I would put him out of the way if I could get at him."

"Does Mr. Graves know that you go out with the boys, miss?"

"Hush about that, as you know that even walls have ears sometimes, my good girl," cautioned Molly, as she put her hand on her companion's lips.

As if to verify the saying a cautious voice fell on their ears at the moment, hissing forth:

"That is true at present, Miss Molly, as the walls heard what you said, and now you are in my power at last."

The two startled girls started back and stared around in consternation, while Molly gasped forth:

"Gracious, if it isn't the rascal himself! But where can he be hiding?"

"Where you can't find me, or a ball from that pistol either. Now, Miss Molly, I have a final offer to make before I appear before Captain Jarvis to denounce you as the new leader of the moonlighters, and Clarence Barry as your second in command."

Norry was almost terrified to death at the threat, on account of her young mistress; but that brave young creature, raising her voice aloud, cried:

"What a fool you must be to attempt to frighten me by such a threat, Master Graves. Who will believe that I am what you say?"

"I can prove it."

"Then come out before Captain Jarvis and prove it."

"Yes, so that you can fire at me as a robber, Miss Molly. Oh, no! I am up to your tricks this time."

"Let us see if you are, then."

As the brave girl spoke she aimed the revolver at a large painting of her mother standing over the mantel-piece.

The report rang out on the instant, followed by a crashing sound and a cry of pain, while Norry sprang to the mantel-piece, as she yelled out:

"If I didn't hit the robber you did, Miss Molly, as there he is." The painting on the wall had fallen out on the floor with a

crash, and out with it came Dick Graves, his haggard face as livid as possible, as he gasped forth:

"Mercy, Miss Molly, and I will not betray you. I am hit, now."

The undaunted girl seized the fellow by the collar of his coat, and dragged him out on the middle on the floor, still keeping the pistol at his head, as she cried:

"And so this is the robber? Here you are, uncle. Captain Jarvis, come and see whom I caught stealing into our bedroom by a secret passage."

Norry flung open the door, and in rushed the old squire and Captain Jarvis, followed by Clarence Barry.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK GRAVES IN A PERPLEXITY.

The fellow playing at cross-purposes in the squire's mansion was not recognizable when Captain Jarvis and the others appeared in the bedroom.

The old squire recognized him, of course; but Captain Jarvis, believing that he had been made away with by the moonlighters on the hills, did not dream that it was Dick Graves.

Springing at the fellow, the officer shook him in a rough manner, crying:

"And so this is the robbing rascal who attacked the servant here? We'll make short work of him soon."

Graves found his tongue at the moment, and he cried out:

"It is all a mistake, Captain Jarvis, I assure you."

"Why, by George, if it is not Mr. Richard Graves," cried the officer, staring at the fellow in great surprise. "Egad, if this is not a resurrection."

Dick Graves turned an appealing look on Captain Jarvis, as he said:

"I request that you will give me a private interview, and I will explain the whole business."

"No, no," thundered the old squire. "I am owner of this house, and I am a magistrate as well. The explanation must be made before me."

Molly felt that her uncle was mustering courage for the occasion, and she determined to assist him in her own way, as she cried in indignant tones:

"And I will be a witness against the false knave. So will you, Norry."

"May I never live, miss," cried Norry, "if this isn't the born villain who tried to murder me down in the library."

"Very serious charges against you, Mr. Richard Graves," said Captain Jarvis, who was more and more puzzled. "How is it that you are found here in this position, when we all mourned for you as among the martyred dead?"

The fellow could not give a ready reply, and the officer continued:

"How long have you been in this house, sir, and how did you get in here? Be good enough to explain, if you can."

Drawing a long breath then, Dick Graves answered the officer, saying:

"When it was reported I was dead, sir, it was not far from the truth, as I was almost put to death by the moonlighters up on the hills."

"But where have you been since you were missing on the hills, sir?"

"I was a close prisoner in one of their hiding-places. Those guarding me fell asleep this evening, and I escaped."

"But how did you get in here without the knowledge of the squire, and why did you hide in that secret passage?" continued Captain Jarvis.

"I was closely pursued down from the hills, and I made for this house, hoping to find refuge here. The rascals pursued me to the back of the house, and I sprang in through the library window. I did not feel safe even then, as I feared that the moonlighters had friends among the men-servants of the house."

"Were the soldiers here at the time?" asked the captain.

"I cannot tell, sir. Hearing a commotion through the house, I thought the outlaws were after me, and I sought refuge in that private passage leading from this apartment down to the library."

"How did it happen, sir," asked the old squire, "that you know about that secret hiding-place?"

"I discovered it by mere accident when I was a guest here just before my being taken by the outlaws."

"Did you know of that passage, squire?" asked Captain Jarvis.

"I did not, captain, until to-night."

The rascal's story was plausible enough so far, but the officer continued:

"Why did you not venture out in the library, sir, when you heard our voices down there awhile ago?"

"I could not recognize the voices through the secret panel, and I feared that you were my enemies. When all was quiet, I did venture out, only to be assailed by a girl or woman with a pistol, who fired at me."

"And small blame for me to take you for a robber," cried Norry, as she winked at her young mistress. "Tis well for you your blood is not on my hands to-night, Master Graves."

"And it is well for you, sir," said Molly, "that I did not shoot you dead as you were stealing out here into my bedroom."

"Pon my honor," cried Clarence Barry, with a hearty laugh, "but you cut a splendid figure Graves. Your friends will look upon you as quite a hero of adventure hereafter."

Exasperated beyond control by the jeering words of his old rival in love and on the turf, Dick Graves sprang at the young man and shot his clinched fist in his face as he cried, in fierce and spiteful tones:

"And how will your friends look on you when I prove that you are the leader of a gang of midnight murderers and robbers?"

The angry man then turned to Captain Jarvis crying:

"Captain, I denounce Clarence Barry here as the masked leader of the band who fought you on the hills that night, and who captured me and threatened to put me to death."

"He is already a prisoner, sir, on a charge of being connected with the moonlighters," answered the captain.

"That is well, captain. Then see that he does not escape, as I assure you that his friends will make a desperate attempt at his rescue. In good truth, I have reason to believe that they are mustering on the hills now to attack you here in force."

As the fellow uttered the last words he cast a malicious glance at Molly, who replied by saying:

"The men of the hills have a great terror to deal with in you, Master Richard Graves, and you will be of so much assistance to the gallant captain in the expected attack. Am I a prisoner also, captain?"

"What nonsense, Miss Molly."

"Then I beg that you will all retire, as I am weary of this business."

The men did retire from the bedroom, leaving Molly alone with her faithful maid-servant.

Donning a certain male disguise, the adventurous girl stole from the house and passed the guards around it.

About an hour after certain shouts and cries around the place told of an attack by the moonlighters.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE HILLS AGAIN.

Captain Jarvis was surprised on hearing the shouts denoting an attack on the mansion by the moonlighters, as the gallant soldier thought that his movements had served to strike terror into the hearts of the outlaws.

The old squire was somewhat dumfounded by the movement, as he could not imagine any motive for an attack on his property at a time when he was at peace with his tenants and the daring spirits in the neighborhood.

Although Captain Jarvis was naturally an impetuous young soldier, his late experience with the moonlighters had taught him a lesson, and he did not order out his men on the first alarm.

He was in the drawing-room with Dick Graves and the old squire when the alarm occurred, and he at once cried:

"Some of the rebelly rascals are trying to draw us from under cover, but we will await them here, if they have the pluck for an attack."

The brave officer did send out scouts, however, to feel the enemy; and one of the men soon returned, to report:

"Captain, the rebels are out in force at the foot of the hill."

Captain Jarvis then ordered out about twenty of his mounted men under one of his lieutenants, with orders to disperse the outlaws and take as many prisoners as possible, saying:

"We'll have to give the rascals a severe lesson and cure them at once."

In the meantime, shouts and cries were heard from the wood to the right of the house, and orders were given to all the sentinels to withdraw within the shelter of the walls, and prepare for an attack.

Very soon after a scattering volley was sent at the soldiers from a park to the left of the mansion, and the old squire cried out:

"Mercy on me, but it seems as if all the moonlighters in Ireland were at us to-night. What can the rascals be up to, Captain Jarvis?"

"They are making an effort to rescue our prisoners, sir, but they will not succeed, I warrant you."

The officer then left the drawing-room to superintend the movements of his men, and the old squire was left alone with Dick Graves for the first time since the rascal was detected in the bedroom.

In the interval Dick Graves had partaken of a good lunch, to which he added several glasses of brandy; and he was now prepared to face the old squire without flinching.

After assuring himself that no one could overhear them, the cunning rascal spoke to the old man in very subdued tones, saying:

"Are we friends or foes, squire?"

"It is not much I care which, sir, as you may perceive."

"I did perceive that you acted to me as if you were prepared to defy me."

"And so I am, Graves. You have kept me in a perfect state of torture for years, and I am resolved that I will not be your slave any longer."

"Then you are prepared to fight me to the bitter end?"

"The fight is out of my hands now, as you will soon find out, Graves."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It should be plain enough. When you betrayed my secret to

another you gave him the same power over me, if he cared to use it."

"Then you admit that Clarence Barry, your nephew and the leader of the moonlighters, is to fight your battle now?"

"I didn't say that Clarence was the leader of the moonlighters, sir."

"If he isn't, I can tell you who is," retorted Dick Graves, with a grim smile and a knowing wink.

Dick Graves placed his mouth to the old man's ear, and whispered:

"Molly!"

The effect on the old man was most painful to behold.

Staggering back and gasping for breath, he fell on a chair, as he exclaimed, in the most pleading tones:

"Oh, Dick Graves, for mercy's sake don't betray us!"

A scornful laugh burst from the rascal, and he cried:

"That was a glorious shot. I only suspected it before, but I am dead sure of it now. Squire Turner, there will be three martyrs in your family ere long, unless I have my full swing."

"Beware—beware, Dick Graves, how far you go, or you will make a madman of me and drive me to kill you. You have already done mischief enough in my family. Injure but one hair of Molly's head, and, as I am a sinner, I will put a bullet through your heart!"

Another scornful laugh burst from the rascal ere he replied:

"Who talks of injuring a hair of the dear girl's head? Man alive, I would kill the man who would attempt it, as I intend she shall be my wife."

"Never!"

"Wait and see, squire. Hush! as here comes Captain Jarvis."

Captain Jarvis did enter the room in an excited manner, and he turned fiercely on the old squire, as he cried:

"Mr. Turner, I regret to say that there is treachery in your house."

"Let us hear it at once, then."

"My two prisoners have escaped in the most unaccountable manner!" cried the excited officer.

"You mean my son and Mr. Barry?"

"Yes, sir. They were confined in the same room where your son was lying sick, as was pretended."

"My son was very sick, sir," said the old squire, as he remembered that he had protested against the young man's removal to town that evening.

"He was not too sick to walk out of the house and ride up to the mountain, sir, as I have reason to believe that is his destination."

"For gracious sake, explain how the escape was effected, Captain Jarvis!" said Dick Graves.

"I will, sir. Two men were placed on guard outside the bedroom door, and those men were seized and made prisoners. They were found in the bedroom a few moments ago with gags on their mouths and stripped of their outer garments."

"As I am a sinner," mentally exclaimed the old squire, "this must be some more of Molly's work! Mercy on me, but it will go hard with her if Dick Graves should denounce her."

Dick Graves was also of the opinion that Molly was at the bottom of the mischief, but he kept silent on the subject, as he only remarked to the excited officer:

"Then I suppose, captain, that the prisoners escaped from the house in the clothes of the soldiers?"

"Without a doubt, sir. The rebels have all retired from the neighborhood now, and I believe they have retreated to the hills with our late prisoners. Squire Graves, I have to inform you that Miss Molly has also disappeared."

"That is strange, indeed," remarked the old squire, who was really puzzled at Molly's disappearance.

"There is nothing strange about it," cried Dick Graves, who was in a furious rage at the turn of affairs. "Miss Molly has fled with her cousins, as you know full well she is in love with one of them; but she'll not have time for a marriage before I'll block the game."

"Who's taking my name in vain here?" cried Molly, as she burst into the room arrayed in a riding habit. "Who am I to marry, Captain Jarvis?"

The charming girl appeared so winsome at the moment that the gay officer forgot all else, as he exclaimed:

"Your humble servant, I pray, Miss Molly."

"Indeed! Where's the clergyman? Mr. Graves looks solemn enough for one. What is the trouble here now?"

"The prisoners have mysteriously escaped, Miss Molly," answered Captain Jarvis, in more serious tones. "Pray where have you been riding to-night?"

"Who said I was out riding to-night, sir? What prisoners?"

"Your two cousins, miss. They have escaped from us. If you have not been out riding, why that garb?"

"I am going out riding now, with your kind permission, captain."

"Where are you going at this hour, Molly?" asked her uncle.

"Up to the hills to her friends," said Dick Graves, with a sneer.

"That is the truth, Master Graves. Will you be my escort?" said the young girl, with a significant smile.

"I will, with pleasure," answered the captain, while Graves hesitated to reply, fearing some trap; "but it will be necessary to take your friends with us."

Dick Graves cast a meaning glance at the young woman as he said:

"In that case I will ride with you also, captain, as I may be

able to point out some beautiful spots on the mountain top not heretofore known to you."

"The more the merrier," cried Molly, readily accepting the rascal's challenge. "Let us away at once, and we will catch the full moon."

"What in the mischief can the mad girl be up to?" said the old squire to himself. "I'll wager my life she has laid a trap to catch Dick Graves again—confound him."

Dick Graves also felt that the daring girl was meditating some bold movement against himself, but as he was in a desperate mood that night, he made up his mind to play the game out to the end.

Having received the consent of the traitor to accompany them, the captain turned to the old squire, saying:

"Would it not be well, sir, if you rode to the hills with us in your capacity as a magistrate?"

Molly's uncle hesitated to reply, when a glance from the young girl caused him to give a surly assent, while he said to himself:

"In the name of wonder, what can the girl be up to? She has some bold design in her mind for crushing Dick Graves or silencing the rascal forever, I'll go bail."

The mounted party soon left the mansion and rode straight for the hills, Dick Graves taking good care to place himself in the center of the troop, which was composed of over fifty men.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

They were nearing the mountain-top as Molly made the last remark, when out from behind a rock a withered-looking old man appeared suddenly before them.

The captain's horse shied on seeing the ghostly figure, while its rider cried out in angry tones as he pulled up:

"Out of the way, old fool! What are you doing in the path?"

The tall old man kept his ground in the middle of the path, and waved his hands in a frantic manner as he exclaimed, in tremulous tones:

"Back, back, I warn you, soldiers, and come no further to-night!"

Molly pulled up in the path, and so did Captain Jarvis, as he cried:

"This is some old madman."

"Yes, yes, I am the madman of the hills," cried the weird-looking old man, whose long, white hair was streaming over his shoulders in wild disorder. "Coax them, tell them to go back, Miss Molly, or they will rue the day."

The soldiers behind were compelled to come to a halt on the narrow path, while the captain turned to Molly in a suspicious manner, as he asked:

"Do you know the old madman, Miss Molly?"

"Of course, she does," screamed the bare-headed old man. "Who about here does not know Mad Dan of the Hill? Go back with you, soldier, or it will be all the worse for you."

The old squire was away in the rear, and he did not see or hear the old madman, while Dick Graves, who was in the center of the line, could not fully comprehend the interruption.

Springing from her horse, and flinging the bridle to the captain, the active girl ran up to the old madman and caught him by the arm as she whispered:

"What is the trouble with you to-night, good Dan?"

"That wicked man who has been trying to kill me so long."

"My good Dan," pleaded Molly, "do get out of our way, as I can assure you that the soldiers are not after you at all."

"Then who are they after?"

"Some of the boys who attacked one of the houses below to-night. That's a good man, and get away to your home as soon as you can."

The old man cast one wild glance along the line of the soldiers, and then turned and disappeared suddenly behind the rocks.

As Molly reached her horse again, the officer asked:

"Is that a part of the play to-night, Miss Molly?"

"That unfortunate old man may be one of the actors in a very serious play to-night, Captain Jarvis. Will we ride on now?"

"My dear young lady, before we proceed, will you not tell me your object in coming up here with us to-night?"

The young girl then conversed with the young officer for some time in low and earnest tones while they stood side by side at the top of the mountain.

The troops still remained at a halt.

Dick Graves was wondering what the delay meant, as he had not perceived the old madman, when he received a summons from Captain Jarvis to ride on to the front.

The old squire received a similar summons about the same time.

Dick Graves trembled from head to foot as he went along the mountain, while he muttered to himself:

"Has that infernal girl discovered my secret? It is impossible!"

While Molly was leading Dick Graves and the others to the cave, the wild man of the mountain was addressing Clarence Barry and young Morris therein, saying:

"I tell you there is danger to us all, as they are coming this way, and he is with them. He seeks my life, as he sought it before."

Young Morris Turner was reclining on a rough bed in a corner of the cave, and he seemed to be very weary after his journey up the hill.

Clarence Barry was sitting beside his young cousin, and he was in the act of giving him some wine when the crazy man entered the cave.

They were both somewhat startled by the announcement made by the old man, and Clarence Barry at once replied:

"You must be mistaken, Tom, as I am certain Miss Molly would never show strangers the way in here."

"But I tell you she is coming with them," rejoined the old fellow, in trembling tones, "and he is coming here to murder me at last."

Clarence was about hastening to the entrance of the cave to look out, when Molly suddenly appeared before them with a smile on her face, saying:

"Don't be alarmed, friends, at the visitors I bring you. Here's Captain Jarvis, my uncle, and Mr. Dick Graves only."

The three men followed Molly into the large cave, which was lighted by a lamp suspended from the ceiling.

When the crazy old man saw the strangers he cowered down behind the bed and covered his face with his hands, as he groaned to himself:

"I knew he was coming to finish me, and he has the soldiers with him."

Clarence Barry put his hand on a revolver as he faced the officer and the others, and then demanded:

"Do you seek us, Captain Jarvis?"

Before the captain could reply Molly interposed, saying:

"Be quiet, cousin, and just listen to what I have to say. We came here to prevent bloodshed, and not to fight, if it can be avoided. What say you, Captain Jarvis?"

"I am not anxious for bloodshed, Miss Molly, if I can perform my duty in a more peaceable manner."

"He came to set the dogs of war on me, I know," groaned the old man, without raising his head from behind the bed.

The crazy old man of the hills then slipped away into an inner cave, without once raising his head to glance at the others.

When the old man retired, Molly turned to the rough bed and bent down over the invalid, as she whispered:

"Don't be alarmed, Morris, and all will be well."

"Do whatever you think best, Molly," answered the invalid.

Molly gave the invalid an assuring smile, and then turned to Captain Jarvis and the others, saying:

"Gentlemen, I have led you here for the purpose of avoiding bloodshed, if possible, but you must not imagine that the prisoners will be given up to you. I now want to tell you, Captain Jarvis, that I am responsible for their rescue, and I am also prepared to defend them against the treachery of that man."

And Molly pointed at Dick Graves, as she regarded him with a scornful glance.

"You surprise me, Miss Molly," said the officer. "Is it possible that you are leagued with the outlaws?"

Molly cast a defiant glance at Dick Graves, as she bluntly replied:

"Leagued with the outlaws, Captain Jarvis! Why, sir, I am the leader."

"Whether you command the outlaws or not, Miss Molly," said the officer, "I have every confidence in your word of honor. Pray proceed with the business you mentioned."

"I will, Captain Jarvis," said the young girl, as she turned to the old squire, who appeared to be in a dazed condition.

Molly cast another meaning glance at Dick Graves as she asked:

"I understand that you threaten my uncle with exposing a serious crime, sir. Now let us have it out at once."

Graves still hesitated to make the charge, and Molly addressed her uncle, saying:

"This person here has been troubling you for years back, because he knew a secret of your early life."

"He has been torturing me."

"Am I at liberty, sir, to expose that secret to those present?"

"Yes—yes," answered the squire, impatiently. "He charges me with having murdered my brother, when, goodness knows, it was all an accident."

"Wait until I tell how the accident happened," said Molly, in clear but determined tones, as she bent a pitying glance on her uncle. "Your brother was a patriot, sir, was he not?"

"He was, girl, and he was outlawed. He was a foolish man."

"He was a noble man, sir, and he suffered for his country," said Molly. "Would that we had more like him. But that is not to the purpose now."

"No, no," cried the squire, impatiently. "I want you all to know the truth, and I will tell it. My oldest and only brother was arrested as a rebel in the troubled times gone by, and he was put in prison."

"After he was some time in prison he managed to escape, and he was supposed to have fled to France."

"We all thought my brother escaped to the Continent," continued the squire, "and I made all the inquiries possible about him. One evening, as I was taking a stroll on the cliff below to my great surprise, he suddenly appeared before me."

"Before I could recover from my surprise he commenced to upbraid me in the fiercest manner, and he then made a dash at me and caught me by the throat, swearing that he would hurl me over the cliff into the waves below."

"But I won't dwell on what happened after that. It is enough to tell you that my poor brother went over the cliff; but, as Heaven is my judge, I did not mean to fling him over. Over he went, however, and I never saw or heard a trace of him after, dead or alive."

"Five or six days went by, and I was expecting every moment

to hear of the body being found, when an old fisherman, living near the fatal cliff, paid me a visit."

"The old rogue had seen the struggle, but he had kept his tongue still about it, and he then came to make his terms with me to keep the secret. I made a bargain with him to give him so much a year while he lived, and I kept the bargain until his death, which took place about six years ago."

"Just after the last visit of the old fisherman, who always dwelt on the fatal subject, Dick Graves here surprised me by telling me he knew my secret."

"No matter how he found out the secret, he has made me pay dear for keeping it. Would you believe it, Captain Jarvis, that infernal scoundrel has made me give up half of my income ever since?"

"Wait awhile," said Molly. "Captain Jarvis, has not Mr. Graves charged my Cousin Morris here with being the leader of the moonlighters?"

"That is the truth, Miss Molly."

"Did he confess that he was himself a member of the band?"

"Of course I did," answered the treacherous rascal. "I was in the service of the government for the purpose of suppressing the rascally outlaws, and I had to join the moonlighters to get at their secrets."

Molly made a sign to Clarence Barry, and they both ran into the inner cave.

In a few moments they returned again, half forcing and half coaxing the wretched-looking old wild man out between them.

Squire Turner started at the sound of the voice and then stared at the crazy old man as he exclaimed:

"Gracious heavens, it is my poor brother or his ghost!"

"It is you poor brother himself," cried Molly, as she cast a look of triumph at Dick Graves. "It was only an hour ago that I found out who he was. Don't be afraid, my poor man, as your brother will not injure you."

"He will, he will!" roared the madman, as he seized the revolver from Clarence Barry. "He robbed me before, and he has come to murder me now. It is him or me for it now!"

As the unfortunate old man spoke he aimed the weapon at his brother and pulled the trigger and ran out of the cave.

The bullet did not hit the squire, who sprang aside at the moment, but it struck Dick Graves on the breast, and the wretch fell on the floor, yelling:

"Oh, I'm dying, and I confess that all said against me is too true. Call the doctor, Miss Molly, and forgive me. Oh, this is death, and no mistake."

The wretched man did not utter another word, as he was dead when Captain Jarvis and Clarence Barry sprang to his side.

Molly then led the way out of the cave, followed by Captain Jarvis and her uncle, leaving her two cousins in a state of suspense as to her future movements.

On reaching a certain point on the mountain, the fearless girl pointed to the troops as she said:

"You are safe now, dear uncle, I will bid you good-by."

"One moment, Molly, if you must pursue your mad course."

"What is it, sir?"

"Which of the young men do you intend to marry if you all three escape to France?"

"Why, uncle, I believe I must tell you a secret before parting. I happen to be a wedded wife already."

"The mischief you say! Who is your husband, then?"

"Your own son, of course, sir. Farewell, and joy be with the pair of you."

The dauntless young woman then darted away toward the cave, and the two men hastened to join the troops.

In less than ten minutes after Captain Jarvis led the soldiers into the cave, only to find that it was completely deserted by its late occupants.

Hastening out again at the head of his men on hearing some firing on the hillside, Captain Jarvis perceived a strong party of the moonlighters retreating down the hillside toward the seaside, and he gave orders for instant pursuit.

The mounted soldiers pressed on with great vigor, but they could not overtake the fleet moonlighters, although the latter were encumbered with a litter, on which the wounded man was borne.

On reaching the cliff overlooking the sea, the officer saw that all the rebels had disappeared, but he could perceive a small yacht bearing out from the bay.

On the mast of the yacht a green flag was flying, while on the deck stood Molly, waving her handkerchief to her friends and foes on shore.

Two days after some fishermen found the body of the wild man under the very cliff where the struggle had occurred with his brother in former days.

About two weeks after the departure of the yacht Squire Turner received the following letter from his niece, and it was dated in Paris.

"Dear Uncle:

"Your noble son has recovered fully, and we will soon sail for America, Clarence Barry sailing with us. When the real work commences in Ireland, you may expect to see us back there again."

"Yours truly,

"Molly, the Moonlighter."

Next week's issue will contain "A YOUNG MONTE CRISTO, OR, BACK TO THE WORLD FOR VENGEANCE."

CURRENT NEWS

Professor Cappello made a descent in the crater of Mount Vesuvius early last month for scientific observations. He succeeded in going many hundred feet below the mouth of the crater.

The Chinese military of marine has just drawn up its programme, which will give China in seven years a fleet of eight battleships, twenty cruisers, ten smaller vessels and fifty torpedo boats and destroyers.

At Cleveland, O., recently four men were under arrest and police are looking for six more, who, they say, ran a "school for gambling" behind a billboard and instructed boys how to play poker and other games of chance. The police swooped down on the gamblers when the games were in progress. The "instructors" and several "students" were captured.

Roger Bresnahan signed a five-year contract as manager and player for the St. Louis club of the National League recently. Mrs. Helen Hathaway Britton, of Cleveland, owner of the club, drew up the contract. The salary, while not stated, was satisfactory to the old catcher of the Giants. Bresnahan's present contract expires at the end of this season.

The Atlantic fleet will probably cruise in the Mediterranean this fall and winter. This subject is under consideration, several alternate voyages being in mind, and final conclusion awaits the return of Secretary Meyer from abroad. The fleet sails about October 10, remaining in foreign waters several months. It will then be assembled at Guantanamo for cruising and maneuver exercises until March.

The Pennsylvania now has all its box cars in use, and new supplies are hard to obtain. Coal cars are also scarce, the movement from the bituminous coal mines to the lakes being as heavy as last year, when a record was established. The ore movement has been improving, and the shipment of finished iron and steel from the mills have been larger than for previous months this year.

It is likely that some of the new 14-inch guns of 45 calibers, which are to be mounted on our latest battleships, will be built at the Watervliet arsenal by the War Department. Bids received from private concerns have not been altogether satisfactory, and as the greater part of the Watervliet arsenal is now idle, the time would be opportune for placing a portion of the 14-inch guns at this factory.

The deposed Shah, Mohammed Ali Mirza, whose attempts to re-establish himself on the throne has met with many reverses, is said to have recently fled to Gumesh Tepe with seven followers. Gumesh Tepe is the port on the Caspian near the Russian border where the ex-Shah landed last July. A large amount in gold captured from the rebel leader Arshaded-Dowleh has been delivered to the Persian Treasurer General.

The armored cruiser Moltke, a sister ship of the Van der Tann, and, with the exception of the four battleships of the Ostfriesland type, the largest German warship afloat, developed in a trial trip recently a speed of 29½ knots. The Moltke was launched last year from the Blohm & Voss yards at Cuxhaven, her 45,000-horsepower turbines being built to insure a speed of 25 knots. Her displacement is of 19,000 tons. The Ostfriesland, the Helgoland and the Thüringen are of 22,000 tons displacement and were launched in 1909.

China at present is having great trouble in controlling the situation in the flooded districts. The troops being concentrated by the Chinese Government to suppress disorders in the Yang-tse Kiang River flood district will probably see serious fighting soon. The authorities are so overwhelmed by the disaster's extent that small effort is being made toward relieving the refugees, who are desperate. The average daily number of deaths among the 70,000 survivors surrounding Nanking alone is approaching 500, of whom perhaps 50 per cent die literally of starvation, and the balance of exposure and disease. Looting and murder are rapidly growing more prevalent. There is still no sign of a subsidence of the flood.

Maine has a fine Shepherd dog which has strong religious tendencies. He is the dog of Elmer Decker of Hinckley. Shep is persistent in his attempts to attend Sunday services. A late scheme of his is to get up very early Sunday morning and call upon a neighbor who takes him to church in his carriage. On arriving Shep makes a practice of walking straight up the aisle to the platform, where he takes his place in the shadow of the pulpit. There, with his nose protruding by the corner, he can see what is going on at the same time he is listening. The other day during the minister's long prayer an automobile came chugging and tooting along, much to the disturbance of Shep's idea of the nicety of things. He rushed through the open door with loud barking and scared the intruder away, but his manner of quieting the disturbance had a reviving effect upon the audience and our correspondent thinks the prayer must have been shortened.

The Osage river appears to have been raising big catfish in secret places, for in spite of all the fishing that has been done in some of Missouri's oldest counties, the big fish are being pulled out this year in greater numbers than for several years. There big "yellow cats" are caught close to the banks on lines baited as large as a man's hand. The fishing parties set a dozen poles and watch them all night. The experts nearby always come back with a catch, for where fish grow so large even one sample is a "mess."

Sketching of military maps from an aeroplane is the latest achievement of United States army aviators in training at the aviation school at College Park, Md. Lieut. Leroy Kirtland will be the first to take up this work, and this week will fly over country surrounding the aerodrome, making maps. The camera already has been brought in use for his purpose, but for rapid military use it is considered slow. A sketcher can make a map for use instantly after a scouting trip, and officers believe this branch of the service will be valuable in war.

Trapped half a mile from shore in a burning motor boat recently, which was set afire by the explosion of the gasoline tank, Roy B. Dimond and George Havers, of Flint, Mich., succeeded in saving themselves and their companions, Miss Charlotte Temple and Grace Devon, both of New York City, at Long Lake. The young men were covered with blazing gasoline by the explosion, but retained their presence of mind and shouted to the girls to jump. The latter refused, as neither could swim, so each of the men grasped one of them and, jumping overboard, towed them safely ashore by the hair.

The present equipment with which the work of digging the Panama Canal is being carried on embraces 100 steam shovels of the latest and best type, 4,131 cars, 160 American locomotives and 119 acquired from the French, 30 unloaders, 24 spreaders, 10 track shifters, 35 cranes, 16 pile drivers, 18 dredges and some 60 barges, tugs and other small vessels. The total excavation, dry and wet, for the Canal, as originally planned, was estimated at 103,795,000 cubic yards, in addition to the excavation accomplished by the French. Changes in the plan of the Canal made subsequently by order of the President, increased the amount to about 174,666,594 cubic yards, over half of which was to be taken from the central division, which includes the Culebra Cut.

The open season for rail and reed birds has arrived and gunners started out early on the marshes and river front, near New Castle, Del. The results of the sport have been very satisfactory and several gunners secured from five to six dozen of birds before breakfast, and others returned before 10 o'clock with good bags. The birds, as predicted, are in better shape than they have been for several years so early in the season. While not rolling in fat, they present a bright appearance and will make up well-grilled or fried. Major Ramsey secured eight dozen of fine birds, and Walter Wipf seven dozen before 10 A. M. Edward Nehere bagged nine dozen before 11 o'clock. Major Ramsey gathered in a number of rail birds, and these were in fairly good shape. The marshes are well covered with water and permit the handling of boats thereon.

Aeroplanes, about forty of which are now in use in the various commands participating in the October maneuvers, add a thrill to the mimic war, between the two branches of the French army. The machines can be seen at almost any hour in some part of the wide field of operations moving swiftly, usually at great heights, or slowly planing down in curves in order that their occupants may keep some particular part of the field under longer observation; then swiftly gliding away out of range of fire from below. The umpires decide whether the venturesome craft have been winged by the watchful enemy on earth. Each aeroplane usually carries two men, one to pilot it and another to make observations through specially constructed glasses, which are required owing to the different perspective of objects seen from above. Accurate observation is very difficult. Excellent scouting results are reported by all the commanders. The flying machines are so distributed that not many are visible at once. The largest number so far seen at one time was three.

Hundreds of camping parties within the state of Maine have had during the past month a complete surprise on account of the sudden cold wave and heavy rains, causing both trout and salmon to rise, and it seems to be the opinion of old guides that the present month will give the sportsman and angler the best results of the year. Salmon fishing along Moose River and near the entrance of Brassua Lake was never better than this fall, although it has been increasing each year. Eugene Treadwell of New York, and F. O. Payson of Portsmouth, are luckiest among a score of fishermen who have been trying their skill in these waters. Both brought in excellent salmon, Mr. Payson having one that tipped the scale at five pounds. H. L. Spohn of New York, who spent the day on Brassua Lake, reports seeing a herd of deer and several flocks of wild duck; he also had a splendid day's fishing. Never were there so many camping parties going into these surrounding woods as this fall, and never did the deer seem so abundant.

NIX

OR,

The Boy Without a Mind

By D. W. STEVENS

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER I.

A RAINY NIGHT IN THE BOWERY

It was a miserable night.

We refer to the night of the 10th of October.

All day long the rain had descended in that steady, pitiless fashion, which lends little hope of its ever stopping, and now at eleven o'clock in the evening the leaden canopy of the heavens remained unbroken; not a star shone, not one had shone for four nights in succession, and for as many days no one in and about the city of New York had seen the sun.

Now although New Yorkers are noted for their patience and cheerfulness even under the most adverse circumstances, if there is one thing above another which makes them cross and peevish it is to be deprived of the light of the sun.

That is why every one was particularly out of temper on the night of October.

Even on the Bowery that strange, cosmopolitan thoroughfare, where bustle and activity is always to be found early and late in wet weather or dry, in sunshine or cloud; even here, we repeat, people showed the effects of the beastly weather which seemed to bid fair never to come to an end.

The dripping car horses with dejected mane dragged the big ark-like vehicles, which formed the only means of transit on the Bowery at the time of which we write, up and down with scarce a passenger.

Along the pavements pedestrians were comparatively few. Men with their fall overcoats buttoned tightly about their throats hurried along beneath steaming umbrellas, unmindful of the groaning orchestrions in the half-empty beer gardens, the banging of tin-panny pianos in basement dives, or the rattle of bones and the dismal shouts of the comic singer bawling popular ditties, long since forgotten in the free-and-easys, then as thick as huckleberries on either side of the way.

Tramps were a scarce article even on the Bowery, but there were still a few, and these hugged the stoves in the "shares" and "sample rooms," causing longing eyes at the bar and anxious ones at the door vainly hoping for the entrance of some "racketing" idiot, who, in his rounds of the "town," might think it the proper caper to "treat the house."

Yes, it was a miserable night, and just as miserable on the Bowery as upon Fifth avenue or Broadway.

Perhaps the most miserable person on the street at the time when the hands of the great clock in the Atlantic Garden marked the hour of eleven, in his own estimation, at least, was young Harry Shaw, a recent addition to the police detective force, who entered that huge hall of beer and harmony just as the Leipzig Lady Orchestra had struck up its twentieth tune.

Now misery is comparative—entirely so, and the shirtless tramp who shuffled by the brilliantly-lighted entrance to the Garden just as Detective Shaw turned in through the middle door, no doubt envied the handsome, stalwart young fellow his youth, manly beauty and warm, comfortable clothes.

Yet Harry Shaw's misery had for him actual existence.

Now for three months he had been on the detective force, having received the appointment through the influence of a certain politician whom it had been his good fortune to oblige, and during all that time he had never been assigned to a case worth naming.

Jealousy on the part of his associates was the cause of it.

While the influence of his political backer was quite suffi-

cient to secure the young man in his position, it was entirely insufficient to prevent his superiors from throwing every possible obstacle in the way of his success.

It looked just as though the inspector had resolved that Harry should not succeed if he could prevent it, while the young man, on his part, was devoured by an ambition to succeed in spite of all obstacles.

Briefly, Harry Shaw, the detective, was dying for want of something to do; miserable now after weeks and months of persistent waiting, he still found himself without a case.

"There is no use of your hanging on any longer to-night, Mr. Shaw; we shan't want you," his superior up at the central office said only half an hour before.

It was just the same every night. It seemed as if there never was any use in his hanging on, and when Harry raised his umbrella at the head of the steps leading up to the big marble building in Mulberry street, he found himself in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

"I might as well give it up," he muttered, as he walked over to the Bowery. "They are all down on me just because I managed to get on the force by outside influence. I shall never get an assignment which amounts to anything if they can help it. Positively I think I might as well resign at once."

And he nursed his bitter thoughts as he walked along to that extent that he scarce realized where he was going, and entirely oblivious to the rain, kept on until he found himself opposite the Atlantic Garden, as we have said.

The blare of the band aroused his attention, and scarce knowing why he did it, he turned in and walking through the bar-room seated himself at one of the beery tables, and remained perhaps ten minutes listening to the music which seemed to exert anything but a soothing effect upon his mind.

"Bah! It's beastly," he muttered, after a little. "I don't want to hear any more of it. I'll go back into the billiard-room and watch a game."

He arose and walked the length of the huge inclosure, descending a short flight of steps at the end, which brought him to the billiard-room—a large, square apartment fronting on Elizabeth street, its door immediately adjoining the stage entrance of the Old Bowery Theater, which, if not exactly in its prime, was still conducted in the old-time way.

But even in the billiard-room Harry found nothing to divert his thoughts.

There was but one table occupied, and that by three half-intoxicated youths, who knocked the balls about so badly that it was simply torture to look at them.

"They've been playing an hour, and have only scored nine points between them," said the table-tender, confidentially. "They're only a parcel of little squirts."

Turning from the table to the bar, the young detective was just about to order a glass of beer and wend his way to the lonely room over a tailor's shop further up the Bowery, which he called "home," when his attention was suddenly attracted by a young girl who, enveloped from head to foot in a shabby waterproof cloak, at that moment glided along Elizabeth street past the door.

"Heavens! there she is now," muttered Harry, half aloud. "What in the world can be her business down here at this time of night? Have I penetrated her secret at last?"

He shuddered.

What business could bring a girl of nineteen—and the

wearer of the waterproof was certainly no more—upon one of the streets of the city at midnight?

Without knowing even the name of this girl, without having ever spoken to her, the young man found himself in love with the face half concealed by that waterproof cloak.

How could this be?

Still, the answer was simple.

Behind the tailor's shop stood a small yard. Behind the yard an unusually high fence, behind the fence a small house, whose upper story barely rose above the boards.

It was one of those mysterious structures which one sometimes finds in New York city tucked away in the rear and forgotten.

It fronted nowhere, and the only means of reaching it was by a blind alley which opened on Elizabeth street, for in front of the house was another fence quite as high as that behind it, and in front of this a big pork packing establishment.

Thus the house stood inclosed by the fences between the ham factory and the modest shop of Isaacs the tailor, and it is safe to assert that the ham smokers had about as much idea of its occupants as had the cloth cutting tailor and his family, which, as a matter of fact, was none at all.

But with our young detective the case was different.

Situated in the rear of the top story of the tailor's domicile, the window of Harry Shaw's room directly overlooked the half-hidden house in the rear.

From the first there had been an air of mystery about the place which had attracted him, and when one morning—it was perhaps a week after he had first engaged the room—he happened to look out of the window and catch sight of the prettiest female face his eyes had ever rested upon, turned toward him from the only window of the rear house which showed itself above the fence, his interest was excited still more.

Yes, it was a beautiful face, a gentle face, a modest face, and yet in the large, black eyes which shone beneath a wealth of raven hair there was an expression of sadness which went straight to the young detective's heart.

This was the beginning.

The end was love.

Day after day Harry Shaw had watched her from the shadow of his curtains as she sat sewing by the window without being able to muster up courage enough to show himself, and when he finally did this the girl, shooting one frightened glance in his direction, hurriedly gathered up her work—a mass of light, gauzy material—and disappeared from view.

Next morning she was there again and so was Harry, but the instant she caught sight of him looking at her she blushed and vanished.

After that it was always the same.

It is true the girl continued to sew by the window—always in the morning, never after midday—but the instant Harry ventured to show himself she invariably disappeared.

Yet she always looked at him and often blushed.

Once Harry had ventured to bow and smile, but this brought such a startled look to the girl's face as she drew back from the window, that the detective never tried it again.

Now, who was this girl? What was she?

Who beside herself dwelt in the little house behind the fence?

Let it not be imagined that Harry never asked himself these questions.

He asked them again and again, but there was never any answer to be had except to the first and last.

The only other occupant of the house was a short, thick-set German with a hunched back and a huge head, covered with a mass of iron-gray hair which stood straight up as if animated by the electric current. A man of uncertain age and most forbidding countenance.

This individual was known in the neighborhood as Mr. Mugg.

Mugg?

The very name was nauseating when spoken in connection with the fair face which had captivated the heart of Harry Shaw.

Was that divine beauty weighed down by the name of Mugg?

Probably.

People said that the girl was the old man's daughter, but right here information, even for one so deeply interested as the detective, became hard to get.

Who Mr. Mugg was or what his business might have been no one knew.

Indeed, the man rarely showed himself outside of the alley, except in the early morning, when he visited grocer and butcher in company with an ugly brute of a dog, and made purchases for the day, for which he invariably paid cash and departed without a word.

Oddly enough, the girl seldom left the house except in the early evening, when she always hurried through Prince street to the Bowery, never looking to the right or left.

When she returned it was generally midnight or even later, and she always came on foot and alone.

Now, considering the state of Harry Shaw's affections, it was quite natural that he should attempt to follow Miss Mugg.

The attempt proved quite useless, however.

Invariably the girl managed to elude him.

Was she aware of his intention?

It almost looked so.

Sometimes she did it one way, at others in another, and once when Harry, growing bold, had managed to keep close behind her she made a dive up a costumer's stairs, and though he waited for nearly an hour, did not reappear.

"Probably she works up there," thought the young man, and with a hastily-designed excuse he ascended the stairs.

To his chagrin he found the place closed and discovered that a back stair-case communicated with an alley, and the alley with a photograph gallery fronting on Broome street.

It was quite easy to see how the girl had managed to give him the slip.

Thus the summer days had passed by and the dreary rains of autumn came, and still Miss Mugg remained a mystery, and Harry Shaw's admiration for her sweet, gentle face seemed to increase.

It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine the interest so suddenly awakened in the mind of the young detective at seeing the girl go gliding past the rear door of the Atlantic Garden at eleven o'clock on that rainy October night.

How little we actually know of what fortune has in store for us!

Miserable through want of success in his chosen vocation, Harry Shaw was just ready to give up in despair at the moment when he beheld Miss Mugg in her waterproof pass the Garden.

He never guessed that the mere act of following her, as he had done a dozen times before, was to prove the turning-point in his career.

Harry burst through the back door of the big beer garden, and, heedless of the pelting rain, started in pursuit of Miss Mugg.

CHAPTER II.

MISS MUGG

"Ready, coryphees!"

The shrill-voiced call-boy was hurriedly making his rounds among the dressing-rooms of the Old Bowery Theater.

Suddenly a whistle sounded, and some thirty gauzy figures, who had glided silently and in groups into the wings, went bounding upon the stage to take part amid red fire and shimmering tinsel in the closing scenes of the famous pantomime "Jack and Jill."

"Aw, really, could you now? I—I—I'll give you t—t—ten dollars if you will."

The speaker, a slim, pimply-faced young gentleman of twenty, with dark hair parted scrupulously in the middle, a collar which reached almost to his ears, and a pair of rimless glasses upon his eyes, had suddenly popped up from somewhere among the mass of ropes and spare scenery which blocked the stage of the Old Bowery, and clutched the call-boy convulsively by the arm.

"Ah, there!" cried the boy; "is it you, Mr. De Silver? I thought old Duffy, the door-keeper, had refused to let you on."

The young man straightened his fashionably-cut coat with a nervous twitch, and smoothed out the wrinkles of his snow-white vest.

"R-r-refuse to let me on?" he stammered. "Well, not much. Me—me! No, my dear boy, never. Nor will you. I want you to introduce me to the divine coryphee the very moment she comes off the stage."

"Can't do it," grinned the boy. "I'd get bounced if I did."

It's dead against orders to introduce swells to de ladies of de ballet. Dey've shut clean down on all that sort of biz."

"Oh, aw, yes, I daresay; but the ten dollars. See, h-h-here's the bill."

He dangled it before the eyes of the call-boy temptingly.

"Can't do it nohow, Mr. De Silver," replied the boy, eyeing the bill wistfully. "It'll cost me me place jest like as not if I do."

"But—h—but, my dear fellow, I'm here already. You didn't let me in behind the scenes. H-h-having safely passed the argus-eyed D-d-d-duffy, w-w-what b-b-blame can be attached to you?"

"Slip round dere behind 'at big pasteboard alligator when she comes off; maybe I'll do it if dere ain't nobody around."

"You will!" cried the swell, clapping his hand to his vest somewhere in the neighborhood of his heart. "Ha! Now I breathe again!"

"What yer givin' us? I know blame well you haven't stopped breathing."

"F-f-figuratively, young Crestenance! F-f-figuratively."

"Who yer callin' names? Dat ain't der way ter get no introduction outer me. S'pose you just fork over that there bill."

"W-when you've earned it, c-certainly. Behold, I vanish behind the alligator, for the curtain has just been rung down. R-remember thy promise. F-f-farewell."

Backing away from the grinning call-boy, Mr. Dionysius De Silver, anxious to impress the coryphees and other ladies of the ballet, who now came grouping toward the dressing-rooms, with his superior talents for tragic declamation, was in the act of waving his hand in the most impressive way, when suddenly his feet flew from under him, and down he went sprawling in the most ungraceful manner imaginable directly between the pasteboard jaws of a huge alligator, the broadest portion of his anatomy coming in violent contact with a row of huge teeth, which, though of pasteboard, were decidedly unpleasant things to sit down upon, just the same.

"Oh! Ah! Ouch! Take me out!" he roared, while the loud laughter of the coryphees was heard even by the audience.

"Why don't yer look where yer goin'?" snapped the call-boy. "I can't help yer, fer here comes Mr. Hoff, de stage manager. Get out der best way yer can."

Fear lent energy to the movements of Mr. De Silver.

To be caught in his present predicament by the stage manager meant simple and speedy ejection at the toe of Mr. Hoff's boot, and it was a known fact that his size was number ten.

Consequently Mr. Dionysius De Silver managed to extricate himself in a hurry from the jaws of the alligator, and amid the giggling of the coryphees and the sneers of the call-boy, slipped in behind the pasteboard monster just in time to escape discovery on the part of the big-footed Hoff.

"What's the row here?" exclaimed the manager, looking about suspiciously. "Get to your rooms at once, ladies. The farce begins in ten minutes, and I've got to set the stage."

There was a whisking of skirts, a vision of a few dozen pairs of silk tights retreating through a grimy doorway above which a flaring gas-jet burned in a wire cage, and the grinning call-boy, who had dodged behind the smoke-stack of a pasteboard steamboat at the first alarm, chuckled inwardly at the thought of his narrow escape.

"Hey, Mr. De Silver! Hey?" he whispered, after all danger was passed.

"Well, Crestenance. What wouldst thou?"

"If you call me Chestnuts again, by jingo, I won't interduce you nohow, boss."

"But harken, over-sensitive youth, I am ignorant of your baptismal cognomen, which being interpreted, means I don't know your name."

"My name's Bill, and I'd thank you to call me by it."

"Bill! Bah! It's beastly, and William, too stiff. What do you say to a compromise? Suppose I call you Billiam? Now then, Billiam, to be introduced or not introduced? Ah, that is the question. The divine coryphee has captured my heart, and I must either capture the coryphee or remain heartless to all eternity—you are, perhaps, able to dimly perceive the fix I am in."

"I dunno nothin' 'tall about it. Yer sich a lippy cuss that yer confuse a feller," replied Master Billiam, coming out from behind the smoke-stack just as Mr. De Silver, in the act of adjusting his rimless eye-glasses, emerged from behind the alligator.

"Do glet of de hull bizness is whether or no I'm to hev dat

ten-dollar note, fer yer might forget to give it to a feller after I'd introduced you to Miss Mugg."

M-M-Mugg! Great heavens! H-h-have I l-l-lost my heart in a Mugg!" cried Mr. De Silver, suddenly seized with a stammering fit again.

It was one of Mr. De Silver's peculiarities that his stammering was not permanent. Only when he was excited did it seize him badly. He could spout Shakespeare and tell theatrical nonsense in moments of calmness, and never hesitate over a word.

"Well, her name is Mugg, what of it?" grinned the boy. "It's as good a name as yourn, and a blame sight easier said."

"M-M-Mugg! M-M-Mugg!" murmured Mr. De Silver. "F-f-frightful. But then to be sure it might be J-J-Jugg, or R-R-Rugg, or even B-B-Bugg."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Billiam! What meanest thou? W-why this sudden allusion to c-c-cheese?"

"She's a-coming out, boss."

Mr. De Silver hastily straightened his coat lapels and re-adjusted his rimless glasses.

The call-boy had told the truth, for the dressing-room door had just opened and Harry Shaw's inamorata, enveloped from head to foot in a shabby waterproof cloak, was in the act of stepping forth.

This then was the secret of Miss Muggs's mysterious occupation.

Simply a ballet dancer at the Bowery Theater—nothing more.

She was gliding along toward the steep, ladder-like stairs which led to the stage entrance, when De Silver slipped the ten-dollar bill into the call-boy's hand.

"Now, Billiam, don't m—miss your chance."

The call-boy planted himself squarely in Miss Mugg's path, while De Silver, bowing and smirking, brought up the rear.

"Here's a gentleman what wants to speak ter yer, Miss Mugg. Mr. De Silver, Miss Mugg—Miss Mugg, Mr. De Silver." It was done, and the grinning call-boy hurried away.

"Did you wish to see me, sir?" asked the girl, flashing a freezing look upon the swell.

"Yes, c—c—certainly. I simply wished—that is—t—to s—s—say——"

"If you have anything to say to me, sir, you must say it quickly. I am in a hurry."

"Yes, c-ce-certainly. It is a r-r-rainy night. Miss M-M-Mugg. Permit me to offer you my um-b-b-brella. Or if you are going my way, or will p-permit me to go yours——"

"But I shall do neither, sir. Stand aside, sir, and let me pass."

"I beg your p-p-pawdon. I hope there's no offence."

"I have no desire for any gentleman acquaintances, sir. Stand aside, please."

"May I not offer these f-f-flowers? A slight t-t-token of my appreciation of your superb d-d-dancing."

From some mysterious receptacle Mr. De Silver now produced a small but exceedingly beautiful bouquet which he extended toward the ballet dancer.

It proved a useless piece of offering.

Thrusting it aside, Miss Mugg bestowed upon the would-be gallant a glance of scorn, and pushing past him, hurried down the stairs.

But the discomfited Dionysius was not the boy to despair.

"Ye gods! Ain't she beautiful?" he murmured. "Even that ugly cloak can't hide it. Pretty good for a beginning. Didn't know I'd have the courage to speak at all. I'll follow her. Perhaps when she finds how hard it's raining she may change her mind about the umbrella, for I see she hasn't got one. Anyhow, I'll make the attempt."

He stole down the stairs, keeping a wary watch for the stage-manager.

Gaining Elizabeth street he found that the rain was falling faster than ever.

Half way up the block, Miss Mugg was hastening, and—terrible to relate—there was a gentleman provided with an excellent umbrella pressing closely behind her—in a moment more he was at her side.

"B—b—bless me!" stammered Dionysius. "So she has a f—f—feller, after all. I was af—f—fraid so. Well, I'm dished."

But a moment later he had taken heart again.

Apparently this new applicant to Miss Mugg's good graces had fared no better than himself, for he fell back almost im-

mediately and stood staring dejectedly after the girl who had crossed muddy Canal street and started on the next block.

"By George, I'm g—going to f—find out where she lives," muttered Dionysius. "I'll f—f—follow M—M—Mugg to her M—M—Muggery—in other words, I'll see her home at a distance whether she likes it or not."

He passed the man before him, heeding him only so far as to throw a glance upon him, and discover that he was young and good looking, and then crossed Canal street himself and hastened after the retreating Mugg.

It proved no easy task to gain upon her, and when Dionysius had reduced the distance between them to half a block, he gave up the attempt.

Still he followed on, never once thinking of the man who moved steadily behind him.

Nor, on the other hand, did the man, who, of course, was none other than Harry Shaw, bestow a thought upon him.

Had the young detective then ventured to address the girl at last?

He had, but the attempt had been a dismal failure.

"I am going your way. Permit me to offer you a share of my umbrella," he said.

But Miss Mugg had simply looked at him, blushed, hung her head, and moved on at a still more rapid pace.

"Confound my bashfulness! Another man would have no difficulty to find the right thing to say," Harry muttered, gloomily, as he fell back.

Evidently it was a bad night for love making.

Still, as Miss Mugg hurried homeward, two devoted admirers followed her, each unconscious of the presence of the other—each with his thoughts fixed only upon the girl.

How lonely the street was!

Usually at so late an hour pedestrians were not wanting even in this by-way, but on this night the state of the weather had driven every one in-doors.

Even the saloons wore a gloomy, deserted air, and the gas before their doors flared furiously, the flame driven this way and that by the wind.

"Aw, really, I hope she hasn't much further to go," thought Dionysius, "for this is just terrible!"

Harry knew that she had not, for they had already crossed Prince street and the alley was not far distant.

Harry looked ahead to locate it, when his attention was attracted to a close carriage standing at the curb, beside the open door of which were two men talking in the rain.

Now there was nothing peculiar in the presence of a carriage in Elizabeth street at this late hour.

It might have belonged to a doctor, a politician making the round of the saloons in his ward, or a few fast young men out on a lark.

Indeed, it is doubtful if the detective would have given it a second thought, but just as his eyes rested upon it he saw the two men spring forward and seize Miss Mugg.

It was done, like a flash.

In an instant they were dragging her toward the coach.

Although nearly the length of the block away, Harry made a dash forward, when he suddenly perceived that his movements had been anticipated.

The man ahead of him whom, until now, he scarcely noticed, had sprung forward, too, and reaching the vehicle just as the two ruffians were in the act of forcing the girl through the door, begun belaboring them with his umbrella, furiously shouting at the same time for help.

Never had Harry Shaw run faster—and there was need of haste if he hoped to be of any use.

Already the bold Dionysius was getting the worst of it—a second later and one of the men dealt him a blow which sent him sprawling on the pavement.

"Quick, Jim! There's some one else coming!" Harry heard one of the ruffians exclaim, and again the two men attempted to force the screaming girl inside the coach.

"Hold on, there!" shouted Harry. "Let go that girl, or I'll fire!"

How did he do it?

Positively Harry Shaw could not have told a moment later.

The exhibition of his revolver seemed to settle it, for the man nearest to him, turning quickly, gave a warning shout, and leaped upon the box.

The next instant Harry was upon the scene in time to be of every assistance to Miss Mugg, but too late to make an arrest.

At the cry of his comrade, the man who held the girl released his hold, and popped into the coach, which instantly started up the street at terrific speed, while the girl, finding

herself free, shot one thankful glance at the approaching detective, and vanished into the alley without pausing to bestow upon her deliverer so much as a grateful word.

CHAPTER III.

A CRY IN THE NIGHT.

Never had a man so many minds all in a moment as Harry Shaw the detective just then.

His first impulse was professional—to follow the villains in the coach. Next, he would have followed the girl, and the upshot of it was he did neither, for just then Mr. Dionysius De Silver gave a piteous groan.

It was too late to hope to overhaul the coach, he could not quite bring himself to running through the alley after Miss Mugg, and what he did, therefore, was to bend over Dionysius and inquire kindly if he was hurt.

"Most killed," moaned the swell, trying to rise. "Oh! Ah! Ouch! My leg hurts me t-terribly. I must have struck it against the curbstone when I f-f-fell."

"You're a brave fellow, anyhow," said Harry. "Here, give me your hand and let me help you up."

"Do you r-really t-think so? I always t-t-thought I was a c-c-coward. But in a c-case like this when a feller's girl is in danger—by George! where is she? Did they get her after all?"

"The girl is all right," replied Harry, experiencing a cold chill at Dionysius' reply. "She's gone into her own house."

"Oh!"

"Do you know her?"

"Of course. Miss M-M-Mugg. She's a b-ballet dancer at the B-B-Bowery."

Now it was Harry's turn to ejaculate "oh!"

"Yes, I know her," continued Dionysius, accepting Harry's proffered help to rise. Oh! oh! oh, dear, I cant stand on my leg at all. I'm sure it's broken. Who do you suppose those fellows were, and what were they up to?"

"Haven't the remotest idea. Let me examine your leg. No, it is not broken, but it is badly bruised. Will you let me offer my assistance? My room is right around the corner on the Bowery. I have a bottle of splendid liniment there. It may save you serious trouble if it could be applied at once."

Now it was not wholly from benevolent or disinterested motives that the young detective made this offer.

He was a man who professed to know Miss Mugg and all about her.

True, he had claimed to be her admirer, but Harry was shrewd enough to size up the elegant De Silver and to determine at a glance that if Miss Mugg was really disposed to regard him with any favor he would have been a little closer to her side at the time the attack occurred.

"If I can only get this fellow into my room, I'll know something about her, anyhow," thought Harry. "Beside, pumping him will be good practice for my detective work."

Once seized with the idea, Harry lost no time in attempting to carry it out.

Evidently De Silver was actually suffering.

"If you think it will really do some good, I'll go," he stammered, "but I ought to know first who you are."

"My name is Harry Shaw."

"And mine is Dion De Silver."

Harry started.

He had heard the name of De Silver before in connection with a certain Fifth avenue magnate, whose wealth ran away up into the millions.

They had started now, and Dionysius was leaning upon Harry's shoulder, when the latter put the question:

"De Silver! Are you any relation to John De Silver?"

"Only a s-son, that's all."

"Oh!"

"Surprised to find me knocking round town on a night like this?"

"Well, rather."

"But a feller must have some f—fun, you know, and what's m—m—money good for unless it will b—buy f—f—fun? I got m—ashed on that g—girl, and that's what's brought me into this scrape."

[TO BE CONTINUED]

THROUGH INDIA ON BICYCLES

OR,

The Adventures of Two American Boys

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER I.

THE WRECK OF THE GOLDEN GATE.

One evening, not so very long ago, two young men were seated in a cozy apartment of a house near Central Park, engaged in earnest conversation.

Both were handsome and manly-looking, though the resemblance between the two extended no further.

One of them, Harry Lindon, was of fair complexion, with a mass of golden hair curling closely round his finely-shaped head. His eyes were blue and his mouth almost invariably wore a smile and testified to the good nature of its owner.

Harry's companion was about the same age as himself, that is to say, he had just turned seventeen.

His name was Jack Turner, and the house in which the two young men were now belonged to his father.

Jack's hair and eyes were black as jet. He was of a passionate temperament and very impulsive, but his heart was in the right place, and of malice he possessed none.

The two boys had been friends at school, and neither of them intended to allow the termination of their school career to put an end to the friendship.

Harry was an orphan and lived with some of his mother's relatives. He was not dependent upon them, however, for he had been left by his father a sum amply sufficient for his maintenance. He was in New York on one of the many visits he paid to his bosom friend Jack.

The latter's father was a large shipowner, having in particular a line of sailing vessels trading between San Francisco and India.

He was always pleased to see Harry Lindon at his house, for he liked the boy and knew that his principles were right, and that it would do Jack good to associate with him.

This evening Jack's face wore an unusually discontented look, though Harry's countenance was as unruffled as ever.

"Get rid of that funeral aspect, Jack, my boy," cried Harry, with a laugh. "I declare it almost makes me feel sad, and that's a difficult business, as you know."

Jack made no answer but went on looking moodily at the floor.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" continued Harry.

"Get your banjo and strike up a tune and I'll sing you one of my songs."

"That would be the last straw," cried Jack. "I reckon I'd not survive it."

Harry Lindon was not the least bit offended. He laughed loud and merrily.

"Oh! I know I'm not a nightingale," he said.

He walked over to his friend and slapped him on the back.

"There's something on your mind, Jack. Out with it and you'll feel better."

"Yes, by jingo! there is," cried Jack Turner, springing hastily to his feet, "and it's been there for some time. See here, Harry, something'll have to be done."

Harry Lindon looked very surprised.

"Done!" he exclaimed, in perplexity, "why, certainly, give it a name and I'll do it."

"Listen to me, and don't talk bosh," said Jack Turner. "I'm perfectly serious, and I'd be glad to see you in the same vein."

Harry Lindon in his efforts to look serious produced an effect which made him appear to be as solemn as an owl.

Jack, apparently despaired of his companion, so without taking any further notice of him he went on with what he had to say.

"It's like this, Harry, we've both left school."

"Thank Heaven for it!" replied Harry.

"I fall in with that pious remark, for if ever a boy was tired of school, I'm that chap. Now, Harry, it's a case of out of the frying pan into the fire. From school to an office desk, that's to be my lot."

"And not a bad one, either, Jack, when it's a case of becoming, in a few years, a partner in your father's business."

"Oh, that's all very well," answered Jack Turner, pettishly; "but if I don't see a bit of the world now, it's years before I'll have the chance again."

"You want to travel?"

"Certainly, don't you?"

"Can't say I've given the matter much thought, but now you mention it I really believe I do."

Jack still continued to stride with impatient steps up and down the room.

"It would pay to give me a year in travel," he said loudly. "I know when I came back I'd be twice the fellow I am now, and better fitted for business."

"So far as I'm concerned there's not the slightest objection," said a voice which caused both of the boys to turn round quickly.

They saw that Jack's father had entered the room.

"I didn't intend you to hear me, sir," said Jack, apologetically.

"Ah, but I'm glad I did, Jack. You know very well that all my life my desire has been to promote your happiness and I've always forwarded every scheme that I think is in your interest. Now in regard to your traveling about before settling down to work in my office, I think it's a very reasonable wish, and instead of worrying, my boy, I'd have been glad if you'd spoken right out to me. Have you formed any plans?"

"No, sir," exclaimed Jack, quite surprised at his father's ready acquiescence with his wishes.

"Then do. You and Harry think the matter over, and come to me when you have a scheme. By the way, Harry will go with you, of course."

"Of course!" exclaimed the two boys simultaneously.

This point had not occurred to them, but there was obviously only one answer to the question.

Far into the night sat the two boys, discussing various schemes.

At length they came to a conclusion.

"It's no good talking any more, Harry," said Jack Turner, in a decided tone. "We shan't improve upon it. I wished to do something out of the ordinary run of travelers, and if we go through India on bicycles, as you suggest, my object will certainly be accomplished."

"We shall have lots of adventure."

"Adventure! Yes. Beside, it's the only way in which you can really see the country. Riding round in railroad cars doesn't give you much chance."

"Through India on bicycles!"

Many times the boys repeated the phrase, for the words had a fascinating sound about them.

They went to bed to dream about their grand scheme, and to wonder what kind of reception Jack's father would give it.

They need not have entertained any misgivings on this score, for Mr. Turner quite fell in with their views, and announced his readiness to do everything in his power to forward the undertaking.

It was determined to start speedily, and to go from San Francisco.

One of Mr. Turner's ships, the Golden Gate, left that port for Bombay before the end of the month, and the two boys were to take passage in her.

Not a care seemed to weigh upon them as the gallant ship sailed out of the bay with the two boys on its deck, waving a farewell to Jack's father, who had come across the Continent to see them start.

As to the voyage little need be said, for though everything was new to the young travelers, it would perhaps be not so interesting to the reader. One voyage is much like another, though the ending may be different.

The Golden Gate called at Singapore. Then she set sail for Bombay, not intending to put into any other port on the way.

But whilst the ship was off the southeast coast of the Isle of Ceylon a furious storm arose.

A tempest of unusual virulence even for Indian seas raged. The ship was driven madly before the hurricane, and vainly did the captain endeavor to ride out the gale.

Then, at midnight, with the darkness around of the deepest intensity, the doomed ship struck upon a reef.

The lofty waves washed over her decks, and plunging hither and thither the jagged rocks plowed holes in her sides.

On board terrible confusion existed.

The men were running hither and thither amid the wreckage with which the deck was littered, and amid the waves which from time to time swept along it.

How far from land they were they knew not.

But at least, hopeless as seemed the attempt, they would make a struggle for life.

Captain Lathrop ordered that the boats be lowered.

The first one that was so served was caught by the waves and hurled with such force by the furious waters against the ship that the side of the boat was stove in, and the small craft sank to the bottom.

The second boat fared better. The third boat did equally well.

Into both these boats sprang the officers and crew.

Then, without hesitation, fearing the worst, yet hoping for the best, as men will do under the most desperate conditions, the two boats pushed off from the ship, and were immediately lost to sight in the intense gloom that prevailed.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO BOYS LAND ON THE ISLAND OF CEYLON.

When morning dawned all that was visible of the Golden Gate was her battered hulk and her broken spars.

She lay on a reef a few miles south of Batticaloa on the east coast of Ceylon.

What a contrast to the fury of the night before.

Now all was still in the air, and the waves that were lashing themselves to fury then roared sullenly as they subsided into a heavy swell.

The Golden Gate had settled down on the reef, and no longer did she move as the waters struck her. The gallant ship had come to the end of her journey, for she would never float again.

Not a sign of life was visible on board, until out of the cabin came a figure.

It was Harry Lindon.

Quite unaffected by the solitude of his surroundings, but wearing a look of sorrow and pain upon his face, he made his way along the deck until he came to what remained at the foremast, a stunted and shattered spar.

"Guess I'll do it and look on it for the last time," he said to himself.

With these words he proceeded to climb up the foremast, a work not unattended with difficulty, considering the state of the rigging.

But the boy possessed the agility of a cat, and after what would have been arduous labor to others, he reached his destination.

Then from his pocket, as he sat in the crosstrees, he took a hammer and some nails, and from around his waist he unrolled some brightly-colored drapery.

It was the Stars and Stripes!

Harry drove the nails firmly home as he riveted the flag to the mast, glancing proudly at it as it fluttered in the breeze.

"Three cheers for Old Glory!"

Harry almost dropped from the crosstrees.

He turned pale with amazement, then on his face came a look of intense joy.

For he had recognized the voice.

"Jack! Jack!" he shouted, "where are you?"

Not waiting for an answer to his question he hurried down on to the deck.

"Jack! Jack!" he called, as he went along.

"This way!" cried a faint voice, "come over here and lend a hand."

Harry Lindon gave a cry of surprise.

Right in front of him, with his body hidden by cordage and broken wood, lay Jack Turner.

"Thank heaven, you're alive."

"Alive! I am that, and very much so, Harry, and if you'd kindly remove what's over me I'd be obliged. Logs of wood and ropes don't make elegant bedclothes."

In a few minutes Jack stood upright on the deck. Harry clasped his hand.

"I never thought to see you again, but I hoped I might."

"And Harry, my boy, I never expected to see you or anyone else alive. In fact, I'm so surprised to find myself living that I don't quite know what to think."

Jack looked around the ship.

"What's become of the others?" he asked.

"Gone!"

"Where—below?"

Harry pointed to the waves as he spoke.

"I guess it's more than likely," he said. "There was such a terrific sea on that the boats must surely have gone to the bottom."

"And why did you stay behind?"

"Jack, it was like this. Everybody said you'd been washed overboard. Somehow I fancied you might still be living, so I stayed on to see."

"At the sacrifice of your life."

Jack looked affectionately at his friend as he spoke.

"I couldn't desert you, Jack. And perhaps I risked less by staying than by going."

The boy was modest about his own heroism and the firm attachment he had shown to his friend.

"I'll never forget it, Harry, never. No, as you see I wasn't killed. I was knocked over the head by a piece of a falling spar, and I've been lying under this heap of wreckage all the night, unconscious for the most part."

"Old Glory revived you."

"You bet! The sight of the Stars and Stripes was the best tonic you could have given me."

"What's to be done, Jack?"

"Why, eat first. I'm starving."

"And I'm in much the same condition."

Having breakfasted as comfortably as if nothing had happened, the two boys went on deck again.

The bow of the vessel was highest out of the water, and the two boys went out and sat on the remains of the jib-boom with their legs dancing over the water.

Across the rapidly quieting sea the coast was plainly visible, and the boys gazed upon its outlines rendered dim by the morning haze.

As the sun rose and the air became clear they saw that it was not more than a mile away. There was a long sandy beach, at the back a high bluff and along the edge of the bluff were growing in thick profusion palms and other trees.

"We'll be able to go ashore soon," said Jack, suddenly.

"Go ashore!"

"Why, certainly, you don't propose to stay here, do you? If so, your life will be a short one. This old hulk will go below before morning."

"But how can we get there?"

"That's easy enough. It's only a question of making a raft, Harry, and steering for land. By the afternoon, from the look of the waves now, the tide will have turned and we shall be carried ashore without any effort and without danger. The sea'll be quieter and won't wash us off our craft."

"Let's go and build the raft," cried Harry enthusiastically.

The project appealed to him. He liked the scheme.

The two boys went back to the deck and commenced to collect the pieces of wood that lay scattered about.

It did not take long to build the raft.

There was an abundance of material at hand.

Soon the raft was completed and placed upon the water with a painter holding it to the ship to prevent it from drifting away.

To collect the stores they meant to take with them occupied more time.

The boys had considerable difficulty in finding anything that had not been damaged by sea water.

However, they came upon some canned goods, and these

with the crackers they discovered would suffice to keep them alive for some time.

Then it was necessary to have some weapons both for attack and defense.

Again they were well off. Harry and Jack each provided himself with a rifle and a six-shooter, and they found an abundance of ammunition not affected by the water.

"Now for the wheels!" cried Jack.

"By jingo, I forgot all about them. I reckoned our bicycle tour was at an end."

"Not if the wheels are all right."

They proved to be uninjured.

They were pneumatic tired safeties of the celebrated "Tren-ton" make.

Carefully the wheels were placed on the raft.

Then the two boys having got on board, Harry cut the painter, and Jack pushed off.

The voyage from the ship to the shore was not eventful. The water had quieted down until its surface resembled that of a pond, and the current was setting toward land. Consequently all that was necessary was for the two boys to sit still and allow themselves to drift ashore.

The sun poured its rays on their heads with dreadful intensity, and this was all the inconvenience they suffered.

Eventually the raft grounded.

It was impossible to float it onto the beach. But the water around it was not more than two feet deep, if that.

Harry carried the bicycles and other articles ashore, while Jack stood in the water hanging on to the raft to prevent its drifting.

Then they allowed the raft to go where it pleased.

It was of no further use to them.

The two boys made their way along the sandy beach toward the bluff.

The cliffs were hollowed out in parts through the falling of the sand. It could not have been by the action of the waves, for the highest water mark plainly showed that the sea never rose so far as that.

They deposited their burdens in the nearest cave, determining to pass the night there, for it was late for starting, and having collected some grass and leaves, they made comfortable beds for themselves. They kept a fire burning all night long, to cheer them with its blaze.

They were both early astir.

Into the waves they plunged, and thoroughly refreshed by their bath, they made a hearty breakfast.

They were ready to start.

It was decided to travel in a northerly direction, proceeding along the beach until they came to an opening, up which they might wheel their bicycles.

Queer objects they looked.

Across each of their backs a rifle was slung, and a bag containing cartridges. A six-shooter was in each boy's belt.

But this did not nearly complete their equipment.

Harry looked like a traveling grocery store.

He had cans containing various kinds of meat and fruit slung to his body, whilst Jack contented himself with bearing upon his back a huge bag containing hard crackers, upon which they were to depend for their living for the immediate future.

When they departed from the cave not much of the ship was visible.

The waves had nearly demolished it, and the beach was strewn with wreckage.

They took one last look at it from the bluff. Then they plunged amid the trees into the Cingalese forest.

It may well be imagined that in the main traveling was not easy. The paths of the forest were for the most part grown over with creeping vegetation, and the two boys at times and to push their wheels along, and very often to carry them.

But at times they came to clear spaces where nothing but palm trees grew out of the hard sandy soil.

Then jumping on their machines, protected from the sun rays by the branches of the thickly grown trees, they scorched along, boiling over with pleasure and excitement. It was a great life!

Neither of them regretted that they had come.

At the earliest possible moment Jack meant to advise his father of his safety, and if Captain Lathrop and his crew were saved there would be nothing to interfere with their enjoyment.

The future seemed filled with visions of delightful adventures.

So the days passed.

At night they lay down in the forest, burning a great fire

always to scare away any wild beasts that might be about. They had left Trincomalee on the southeast and were near Aripo, from whence they would endeavor to cross Polk Strait on to the mainland.

For the most part their way led through the forest, but they passed many tea plantations for which the island is famous, and the air was laden with the fragment perfumes of the abundant species which grow there. Truly it was a paradise.

Now they came in sight of the sea.

"To-morrow we'll cross," said Harry.

"If we find a boat. I guess that won't be difficult."

Harry wandered forth and came back with the news that he had discovered a place where they might sleep.

"It's a strange looking building, Jack," he cried; "come along and see it."

The place to which Harry led his chum was a building without a roof, and with no doors. There was one entrance and this was very wide.

Inside were seats, formed out of the earth, by cutting the soil away in tiers.

At one end of the building a fire burned, and toward it the boys made their way.

Some huge stones stood erect not far from this fire.

The boys placed their wheels up against them.

Then they lay down, and, being very tired, soon slept.

CHAPTER III.

THEY ESCAPE THE NATIVES—PURSUED BY A TIGER.

The sleep of the two boys was of short duration.

What awakened them was of a startling, not to say alarming, nature.

Harry was the first to be aroused.

He grasped Jack by the arm.

At the same time he put his hand over his mouth, doing so to prevent him from crying out, and the precaution was fully necessary.

"Not a sound, Jack," whispered Harry, "for all I know our lives may be in danger."

Jack was astounded.

"In danger?" he muttered.

"Yes, in danger," repeated Harry, still talking in the same low tones; "we are no longer alone. People are coming in here. What their game is I can't make out. We must wait and listen."

There was no need to tell Jack that people were entering the building.

They were coming in crowds.

Their footsteps could be plainly heard, and their voices were plainly audible. There was a perfect buzz of conversation.

Besides this, the building was no longer in the darkness that had been only relieved by the flames of the fire that burned there.

The new arrivals carried torches, and their burning brands lit up the darkness.

Harry was able to peer through an interstice between the stones which sheltered him and his comrade.

He saw that the men who had entered the building were natives. Their dusky skins and their scanty costumes showed this. For the majority wore only loin clothes.

Slowly they filed in and took their places on the earthen seats, formed by the excavation that had been made.

This went on until apparently there was not one empty place left.

There could not have been less now than five hundred people there, and they were all men.

Spellbound at this singular and unexpected sight, the boys continued to look.

They were entirely at a loss to account for the reason for this gathering, and they did not trouble themselves to indulge in any speculations upon the point.

But they were to see more yet.

From out of an aperture which had hitherto escaped their notice, so shrouded was it in gloom, entered a procession.

At the head marched a number of men who beat on an instrument resembling a drum, except that it was covered with metal instead of skin.

These men produced a hideous noise.

The sounds, however, were partially drowned by the voices of the men who immediately followed the musicians.

Not less than twenty men were singing some wild tune,

apparently at the top of their voices, judging by the noise they produced.

All of these men were dressed in long flowing robes, the color of which not being ascertainable by reason of the glare of the lights.

Then came a large body of men, all clothed in white, with turbans on their heads, looking very stately and solemn as they advanced, and all of them mute.

The procession paraded through the center of the arena, the musicians and singers dropping out one by one and forming with the men in white a complete circle—but for the open space they presented near the entrance to the building.

The men in white crowded together near the fire, and many of them threw some material into it, causing the flames to shoot up fiercely.

One of the white-robed men, apparently the leader, raised his hand.

Instantly every one stood up and a wild shout rent the air.

The noise was succeeded by a profound calm. This was broken by something that prevented the boys from seeing more.

Harry leaned heavily against one of the stones and caused it to rock. As it did so something that had been placed upon it fell to the ground with a crash.

"We are discovered!" hissed Harry.

It was so. The words were no sooner out of his mouth than a dozen men rushed round the stones toward the boys.

"Quick!" cried Jack, "on your wheel, it's our only chance. We must ride for our lives."

They seized the handles of their bicycles and sprang into the saddles.

Utterly astounded at seeing the two boys, and more so at the sight of the bicycles, which they saw for the first time, the natives jumped back.

Down the center of the building dashed the boys, working like mad.

There was a loud cry from the leader of the natives.

Several men sprang forward as if to stop the progress of the two young Americans.

One man would have undoubtedly prevented their egress if he had not stumbled against a man who seemed to be in the way more by design than accident.

The boys let go of the handles and struck out right and left to save themselves from being interfered with.

Now they were out of the building, but close at their heels ran a howling crowd.

It was a ride for life, and the worst of it was the boys knew not where they were riding.

But they went straight ahead and speedily distanced their pursuers.

"So far we've escaped," said Jack, "but at any moment we may be stopped."

"Then our lives won't be worth much, judging from the looks of those fellows."

"That man who tripped the other up saved us. I'd have been thrown down but for him, and he did it purposely, too."

No more was said. The boys made their way toward the sea, which they could now hear beating against the shore, and soon they were on the beach.

"Our troubles are just beginning," said Harry; "we can't go forward, and it's certain we dare not ride along the beach."

The boys sat down and thought the situation over.

They had not been there long when a man rushed past them, and he fell apparently exhausted on the sand, where he lay breathing heavily.

Jack rushed and stood over him.

"Who are you?" cried the boy.

It was some minutes before the man could recover his breath.

"Your poor servant, Ram Chunder, sahib," he gasped.

"The man that saved us!" cried Harry, recognizing the face of the native.

"By Heaven, it is so! Say, are we in any danger now?"

"The men thirst for your blood, sahibs."

"That's a cheerful outlook."

"But Ram Chunder can save you again. Quick! Come with me and make no noise. Our lives depend on it."

He led them to a creek not far away, where a small felucca lay.

The boys put their bicycles aboard and jumped in. There was no need to ask questions.

Ram Chunder cut the painter and pushed off.

Instantly a crowd of men rushed out of the darkness toward the small craft.

Luckily the sail was up, and having filled, the boat was making rapid progress.

Cowering under the boat's sides, the three fugitives escaped the shower of spears that came after them, and in a few minutes they were safe at sea.

"They cannot reach us now. We are saved!" exclaimed Ram Chunder.

"Now my friend Rammee," Jack christened him thus on the spot—"I'd be glad to know what object you had in saving us, for I saw you trip up the fellow who went for me."

"Sahibs, I knew if you were caught it was death. You were in holy ground, the temple of the Fire Worshipers, and your lives were forfeited. My life was forfeited for helping you, so I had to flee."

"But that doesn't explain, my friend, why you saved us," persisted Jack.

"Your servant will tell the reason. I was a servant once to a white man. I did him an injury, and heavy punishment was my due. He was merciful. 'Go, Ram Chunder,' said my master. 'I pardon you. Henceforth, be good to all my kind and so wipe out your sin.' I have helped many white men since, sahibs. That is all."

The tone of the man seemed sincere, and the boys questioned him no further, but they thanked him warmly, and promised him a large reward.

Later on, he told them he came from Cashmere, in Northern Hindoostan, and had traveled nearly two thousand miles to attend the ceremony that the boys had so rudely disturbed. Nothing remained for him but to travel home. Even there his life, so he stated, was not safe after what he had done.

They crossed Polk Straits, and landed near Ramnerd, leaving the boat on the beach.

The boys decided to ride northward without delay, and Ram Chunder said he would be waiting in Tanjore, through which city they intended to pass.

The road they were traversing was well constructed, but the sand was so deep that traveling at length became difficult.

"We'd better turn down here," said Harry, "it looks better."

"We must keep in a northerly direction."

"I know, and if this path doesn't wind round to the north we'll come back."

Certainly, Harry's proposal was acceptable. In place of the sandy road, they were now on a hard forest path, sparsely covered with coarse grass, and furthermore they were protected from the fierce rays of the midday sun by the branches of the trees.

As they scorched along, they could hear as they had in Ceylon, the noises made by the wild animals and reptiles with which the jungle was teeming.

Once the deadly cobra, whose bite is fatal, glided away from under their advancing wheels.

The cry of the cheetah, the Indian leopard, was heard, and the boys were almost tempted to enter the jungle in search of sport, not heeding in the slightest the danger they would incur by so doing.

For, inexperienced as they were, they would be running a terrible risk.

Since they had escaped from the wreck of the Golden Gate, they had not found such a good road as the one they were traversing.

The ride was so exhilarating that they wished to make the most of it.

Now they came to a point where the path broadened. No longer did the great forest trees abound, and nothing shielded them from the Indian sun.

But the jungle around was as thick as ever.

All at once behind them they heard a great noise.

Some animal had evidently bounded out of the wayside vegetation onto the path.

The noise was succeeded by a terrific roar which seemed to shake the forest.

"A tiger!" cried Harry in affright, glancing back.

No need to say "Ride hard." The knowledge that the monarch of the Indian jungle was at their heels was sufficient.

They sent their wheels along for all they were worth as they fled from the ferocious brute.

Along came the tiger, and Harry Lindon and Jack Turner glanced back to mark his progress.

A worse peril was in front, but they knew it not. A hundred yards ahead was an awful precipice, towards which, with averted heads, the boys were riding.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

An interesting discovery was made at Spittal, England, by a number of workmen. Digging operations in connection with the building of a fish-curing establishment were being carried on, and a quantity of human bones were turned up. This was followed by the unearthing of a number of stone coffins, each containing human remains. The coffins bore no resemblance to the massive sarcophagus recently disinterred at Berwick, but consisted simply of rough stone slabs.

The first installment of the proposed improvements which are intended to place London, in respect of its equipment, on an equality with Liverpool, Southampton and other ports, is about to be commenced by the construction, at a cost of twelve million dollars, of the South Albert dock. The entrance lock will be 110 feet wide, 1,000 feet long, with a depth of water of 48 feet, and the works will include a new dry dock of the same length and width, with a depth of water of 38 feet.

The antiquity of the game of checkers or draughts is generally admitted. Paul De Mallet, in his treatise on draughts, written about 1668, shows quite clearly that the game, or its equivalent, at least, is depicted on the early Egyptian monuments. The game was certainly known among the Greeks and Romans of the earlier times, and traces of draughts have unmistakably been discovered in the writings of other peoples of antiquity. The game saw a great revival in Europe during the sixteenth century.

The most northerly coal mine in the world is that of the Arctic Coal Company (an American concern) at Advent Bay, on the east coast of Spitzbergen. The coal crops out at the surface of the ground several hundred feet above sea-level, and is brought down to the harbor by a funicular railway. The company has about 150 men at work, chiefly Norwegians, who remain on the spot all the year, although Advent Bay is blocked by ice and inaccessible to vessels for eight months—viz., from November to June. About 6,000 tons were taken out last year, but the maximum output has not yet been reached. The chief market for this coal is Norway, which has no coal mines of its own.

In the early days of the reign of the late King Leopold of Belgium a seventh son was born to a Brussels woman, and when the king heard of it and was told that the boy was the seventh successive one, and that no girl had come to the family, he asked to be the baby's godfather. Ever since then every seventh son born in Brussels has had the same honor, and the mothers have received gifts in keeping with their stations in life. King Albert, in carrying out the old usage a short time ago, had some difficulty because the seventh son was twining. He could not stand for both boys, because that would give the family two Alberts. The remedy was found by Queen Elizabeth, who suggested that her little son, the Duke of Brabant, be the godfather of the eighth boy, who consequently received the name of Leopold.

Because of the erosions of numerous drainage basins of the United States the surface of the country is being removed at the average rate of an inch in every 760 years. That is rather comfortable to know. It will take a great many years before the land is again sunk beneath the ocean. The Geological Survey is sponsor for this information. It says additionally that, although the amount may appear trivial, it is stupendous when considered as a total. The Mississippi River carries annually to the sea 136,400,000 tons of dissolved matter and 340,500,000 tons of suspended matter, and of this total the Ohio River carries 83,350,000 tons and the Missouri River twice as much. The Colorado River, which has built up for itself a vast delta, brings down more suspended matter than any other river in the United States, delivering annually 387 tons for each square mile of its drainage basin, or a total of 100,740,000 tons. The rivers of the United States carry to tidewater every year 270,000,000 tons of dissolved matter and 513,000,000 tons of suspended matter. The total of 788,000,000 represents more than 350,000,000 cubic yards of rock, or 610,000,000 cubic yards of surface soil.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

Mrs. Grumpps (looking over new house)—What in the world is this vast attic for? Mr. Grumpps—It's to hold the things that you buy and can't use.

Mrs. Spinks—Where is the money you have been saving for a rainy day? Mr. Spinks—In the Neverbreak Savings Bank. Mrs. Spinks—Well, give me a check for some of it. I want a new waterproof.

The teacher wanted to make a certain boy understand what conscience is. She said: "What makes you feel bad, when you have done wrong?" "My father," replied the youth, missing the mark a long ways, but telling the truth.

"I'll bet I could write a rural drama." "Let's have your plot." "Well, in the first act, the girl leaves the farm; in the second, all hands eat a meal in full view of the audience; and in act three comes the reconciliation. It's a cinch."

Mr. Slimpurse—Come, it's time we started for Mrs. Wayup's reception. If we hurry we can catch the next car. My gracious! Why are you streaking your wraps with mud? Mrs. Slimpurse—To make it look as if we had come in a carriage.

He (timidly)—Now that we are engaged, I—I presume I may—may—kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I? She (encouragingly)—Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know.

"What's the matter with you this morning, Delia?" asked Mrs. Wise. "Oh, ma'am," replied the servant girl, 'tis the terrible earache I have this mornin'." "Ah! you should be careful, Delia. All the keyholes in this house are very draughty."

An old man with a head as destitute of hair as a billiard-ball entered a chemist's shop and told the assistant that he wanted a bottle of hair-restorer. "What kind of hair-restorer do you prefer?" "I think I'll take a bottle of red hair restorer. That was the color of my hair when I was a boy."

Russian Officer (politely)—Pardon me, I know you are a stranger, but it will save me much trouble and questioning if you will kindly raise your hat as the others do. Here comes the czar. American (defiantly)—I raise my hat to no potentate on earth. I am an American—a freeman, sir, born within the shadow of— Russian Officer (struck with a bright idea) The czar is very rich. American (humbly raising his hat) —Why didn't you say so before?

Col. W. P. Brownlow, secretary of the National Soldiers' Home, said at a dinner in Brownsville, Tenn.: "They are great wags, the old soldiers in our Johnson City Home. I heard one of them describe the other day a very fierce and famous action. Two hundred men had been pitted against three hundred men, and after the fighting only sixty brave fellows—thirty on each side—remained alive. The old soldier paused solemnly. 'Of that sixty, boys, he said, there only survive to-day—' Overcome, he blew his nose violently. 'There only survive to-day by actual statistics 417.'"

WILD JOHN'S REVENGE

By Horace Appleton

The wedding party marched out of the church and down the village street to the joyous sound of the church bells, while the old organist played his liveliest tunes, and the villagers shouted themselves hoarse and tossed up their hats.

"Long life to Dick Byrne and his bonny bride!" they shouted, and then gave three times three roaring cheers.

John Wilde stood in the shadow of the old gray, vine-covered church, and gazed sternly at the merry party. He never opened his lips, and if there was one person in the little seaside village of Crowsnest who did not wish success to the newly married couple, that person was John Wilde, or Wild John, as he was universally called, partly from his roving disposition and wild, untamed spirit, and partly, too, from his strange appearance, with his short, stout frame, his unkempt gray locks and his gray eyes, which never seemed to look straight at you, but always at some far-away object.

He had loved Daisy Thorne, and he could ill brook the thought that another should take her from him and particularly Dick Byrne, who was younger than he, and a fine, manly fellow withal; not that John was lacking in courage, for he could be brave enough, on occasion.

"I will have my revenge, Dick Byrne!" he had said, the night before, in the tavern at the foot of the cliff, where his rival had strolled in to have his last bachelor drink with his cronies. Dick had only smiled and asked John to drink with him, but the latter refused.

"But for this," he growled, "there isn't a man in all Crowsnest or the world who would have wished ye more good luck and happiness; but now—well, I can't do it, Dick, and I'll have my revenge, as sure as my name is John Wilde."

Then he left the tavern and went home to his humble lodgings, and sat up all night brooding over what might have been if he and not Dick had been accepted by pretty Daisy Thorne. He left the house the next morning unrefreshed, and went to his work, but felt such an uncontrollable desire to see the party that he got up from his bench and walked to the church, where he waited until all was over, and watched the happy pair come out and go to Dick's pretty cottage.

In the course of two or three days he met Dick again in the village street as he was going home to supper.

"Ah, John, I'm glad to see ye. Ye've not been to see Daisy and me yet to wish us much joy."

"No more o' that, Dick Byrne; I never can wish ye joy; ye've taken away the light o' me eyes, an' I'll never forgive ye—and what's more, I'll have my revenge!"

Then he walked rapidly on, never taking Dick's extended hand, and never once looking behind him, but keeping straight on until the trees hid him from sight. The next day he had disappeared from Crowsnest, and all the gossips could learn was that he had gone to sea again, and this time upon a long voyage, and perhaps would never return.

Certain it was that for five long years nothing was seen or heard of him, and he was given up for dead, and by and by forgotten by nearly all in the village.

Dick Byrne often thought of him and made diligent inquiries in all the ports he visited in order to learn the fate of his old shipmate and chum, but all in vain.

Every time that he returned to the village from a voyage he would ask Daisy if she had heard anything from or of John, but the answer was always the same—there was no news of him.

Dick prospered, and being a thrifty man, the end of five years found him master of his own vessel, a fine schooner, and he determined to take his wife and little Dick along with him on his first voyage; "Just for good luck," he said.

So they sailed away, carrying with them the good wishes of all, and not one remembered the dark words of Wild John, nor even once thought of him, as the white sails of the Daisy glistened in the sunlight.

One night, some months afterward, a storm arose, such as had not been seen on that coast for years. Many vessels sought a harbor at Crowsnest, but went down right in sight of the cliffs and the town, and their hapless crews were drowned.

It was, indeed, a wild night. The rain poured pitilessly down, and the thunder and lightning were incessant. The monstrous breakers rolled on the beach with a mighty rush and a sullen roar, or beat themselves against the cliffs as if they would have torn it from its place.

When the storm was at its height, the boom of a cannon was heard amid the fierce howlings of the gale, and soon after a rocket illumined the dark sky, and by the glare of the lighting a fine schooner could be seen battling with the waves.

She had been driven upon a sunken rock despite the efforts of her captain, who seemed familiar with the coast, and she was fast threatening to go to pieces.

The little beach was crowded with sailors, fishermen and wreckers, and a life-boat was speedily manned, shoved into the surf, and pulled for the sinking vessel.

Early in the evening a strange-looking man had come into the village unnoticed, and had put up at the little tavern. He appeared to be a seafaring man, and was deeply bronzed by exposure to the sun. His wild eyes, his straggling locks of gray attracted attention, and one or two thought they knew him, but he seemed to read their intentions and quickly disappeared in the darkness and the storm.

The man was Wild John, drawn back to Crowsnest by an irresistible impulse to gaze once more upon familiar objects of his boyhood, and to see how Dick Byrne and his little wife prospered.

For five years he had struggled against this feeling and kept away. He dared not trust himself, and so he went to far-away places, where there was no chance of getting away in a hurry, and tried to forget his disappointment. It was of no use, however, and here on this wild October night we find him walking on the cliffs in the pouring rain, and giving way to his sad thoughts.

Presently he comes upon a wild scene, for as he steps out upon a ledge of the cliff, from which a fine view of the sea and the beach is to be seen, he observes a vessel in distress, and a boat returning from her, in which is a woman.

Something about the woman's form seemed to startle him, and as the boat neared the shore, she stood up and seemed to be making some appeal to the men on the beach, for she gesticulated wildly, and pointed to the struggling vessel.

A sudden flash of lightning revealed her features with startling distinctness, and John, even at that distance, recognized them to be Daisy Byrne's.

"Yes, it is indeed she," he said, from his place on the cliff, gazing intently at the boat which was now grating upon the sands, and ozen men rushing up to assist those on board to land.

John dashes down the rocky path he knows so well, and in a short time is at the beach where a scene of the utmost confusion meets his eyes. Bits of broken spars, cases of goods, fragments of boats and torn sails strew the beach and toss about among the waves. The wreckers are busy saying what they can, and but little attention is paid to human lives.

The woman in the boat is begging someone to go back for her husband and child, who are still on the vessel and in imminent danger of being lost.

"Do none of you know Dick Byrne?" she said, "and will none of you go after him, here on his own coast, in his own town. Shame on ye!"

"Here, lads!" shouted a strangely familiar voice, and an old man rushed among them. "Shove her out now into the surf, and jump in. Show yerselves men!"

"The sea is too strong, there's no living in it—it's worse than when we went afore," said one.

"It's only throwing away our lives, we'll be, to venture out, from another."

"Then I'm willin' and ready to take the risk if I go alone!" cried John, as he pushed the boat into the surf.

His example was infectious, and a crew soon joined him, and under his guidance they put for the vessel which was now fast breaking up.

He seemed to know every rock, every shoal, every eddy, and guided the boat so well that the craft was soon reached though the waves beat over them, and many times were they threatened with death.

"Here's a line, man!" cried John, standing up in the boat and shouting to Dick, whom he could see on the deck holding his little boy. "Lash the child to your back and catch it!"

How that clear voice, old though it was, startled Dick as it reached him. He looked and saw an old man hurl a coil of line at him. It whirled through the air, uncoiling as it flew, and in a moment afterwards the end struck the deck not far from his feet.

He quickly seized it and made one end fast to the rail, lashed the child to his back, and bidding him be of good cheer, seized the line in his hands and slid into the sea.

"Take in the slack, boys, so as to give him a chance," said John. "There he is, he'll soon reach us. Heavens, no, he sinks. He's struck his head on a rock. He'll be drowned!"

All looked aghast as they saw Dick overcome and exhausted, and every man gave him up for lost.

"Hold on a bit!" cried John, throwing off his sea-boots and his heavy jacket, "I'll not see you die that way if I did bear you a grudge once."

He quickly fastened the end of a line about his body, just under his arms, and diving into the surging waves struck out sturdily for his sinking chum.

The strong waves beat against him and dashed into his face, but he kept on bravely and manfully, determined to die if necessary in order to save his old time friend.

All thoughts of animosity or revenge had long passed out of his mind, and he saw only a strong man reduced by exhaustion, a pretty child and a sorrowing mother. It was his duty to reunite these even had he never seen them before. Human life was in danger and he must save it, even if his bitterest foe was the one to be saved.

With these thoughts his arm was nerved and his soul fired to do great things, and with vigorous strokes he smote the waves and soon seized Dick by the shoulder, telling him to make a last effort. He turned upon his back and began swimming backwards, keeping a hold on Dick.

The boat was nearer by this time, and in a few minutes two men and a child were hauled in and the boat started to return. John was well-nigh exhausted with his efforts, but he managed to sustain himself and direct the boat's course until there was no further need of his doing so; and then, worn out, he asserted herself, and the poor old man sank, fainting to the bottom of the boat.

In a few minutes the shore was reached and Dick Byrne clasped his wife to his breast. He had remained on board the vessel until his wife had been taken ashore, and then it was almost too late to save himself, as the schooner's boats had all been stove in or washed away.

As he stepped upon the beach he turned to take one last look at the *Daisy* ere she foundered. As he gazed, a mountainous wave with tumultuous force rushed upon her, lifted her high in the air, and then dashed her with such fierce energy upon the rocks that when the next wave came it tossed only the broken fragments about and scattered them all along the beach.

"Poor thing—poor thing!" sobbed Dick, "that's the last of her. Not a plank saved, and this only her first voyage. It's hard lines for a poor man to lose a vessel he's been earnin' so long."

"Never mind, Dick, our lives have been spared, and we ought to be thankful for that," said his wife, putting her arms about his neck and kissing away the tears that would come, in spite of his efforts to restrain them.

"Keep a good heart, Dick, you've health and strength yet, and another vessel will soon be built."

"I say, lass!" Dick said, suddenly, "didn't I see John Wilde in the boat? didn't he bring me safe to the boat after I hurt myself? Where is he?"

"I don't know, Dick; I don't see him."

They both looked up and down the beach, but could not find him whom they looked for, and at last they went up to the village and entered their little cottage, lighted a fire and made themselves comfortable.

The child was put to bed, and while the bright wood fire cracked, snapped, danced and sparkled, the little iron tea kettle keeping time with its singing, Dick and Daisy sat side by side and talked over bygone times, and made plans for the future, while the storm still raved outside, and the rain beat against the pane.

Thus they sat, heeding not the passage of time, until at last when it was nearly morning, and the fire had burned so low that it was only a pile of hot, glowing ashes, there came a loud tap at the door.

Dick bade his visitor enter, and a rough-looking man in an oil-skin jacket and sou'wester came into the room, and shaking himself like a water dog, said:

"John Wilde wants to see you. He's in a mighty weak state; the storm was too much for him. He's taken a chill, and it's settled on him so that the doctor says he can't get over it, and he wants to see you that bad that it'll never do to disappoint him."

"Never fear, Dan, I'll go; only wait a moment. Here, Daisy, stir up the fire a bit, and get us a cup of hot coffee—the kettle is boiling still, I guess."

While the officer is making, Dick gets out a great coat from the dresser, draws on a dry pair of boots, and puts a flask of liquor in his pocket, for fear John may need it. Then he and Dan have a good drink of hot, finely flavored coffee, and

they go out into the storm just as the morning light begins to drive away some of the gloom of the night.

Over the hills and around by the top of the cliff they go until at last they reach the little house where John lodged so long before his disappearance.

They entered and found John lying upon a cot with a ghastly look upon his face, and his eyes, once so wild and glistening, now almost closed and their fire and expression nearly gone. His thin, wasted hands lay upon the coverlid, and the blue veins showed through the transparent skin which barely covered them.

He looked up at the sound of footsteps, and seeing Dick, smiled and put forth his hand.

"I sent for ye, Dick," he said, slowly, "for I haven't much of a while to stay, and I wanted to tell ye something; I did have a grudge agin ye, Dick, once, and I said I'd have my revenge."

"Never mind that, John, you didn't mean it, I guess, I know you didn't."

"Well, Dick, I've paid off my grudge and I've had my revenge, though it ain't as I thought it would be. I couldn't do different, though, Dick, when I see Daisy begging for someone to save you, and so forgot all the hard things I'd said, and I just vowed to save you if it killed me."

"Poor fellow, I'm afraid it has," said Dick, "I owe my life and that of my boy to you, John, and Daisy's, too, for I don't believe she would have lived if I'd been drowned, John."

"I'm glad I've done something, Dick, and now will you forgive me my hard words? I've not many more minutes to spare."

"Indeed I will, John, I forgot 'em long ago."

"Then there's one thing more. Dick, I haven't any children, nor brothers, nor nothing, and I've managed to lay up quite a pile of money since I went away, and with what I had already there must be now close on to five thousand dollars. Some of it's in the bank, but I drew up a sort of a will like, this morning, and had it witnessed, and you won't have any trouble in getting it out."

"What do you mean, John?"

"I mean that I want you to take this money, all but a couple of hundred dollars or so which I want you to give to Mrs. Drake, my landlady, and I want you to buy or build a new vessel in place of the one you lost."

Dick was about to refuse, when he saw a pleading look in Wild John's face, and he hadn't the heart to do so; and, consequently, consented to take the money and do as John wished with it.

In a short time the sick man became unconscious, and turning his face to the wall fell into a deep sleep. He never awoke from it, however, and when the storm ended and the clouds broke away, and the sun shone gladly over all, its rays, entering the latticed window, fell across the cold face of a corpse.

Dick Byrne took the money that John had given him, doubled Mrs. Drake's portion and gave John a handsome funeral.

After the new vessel was built and launched, there was still some money left, for the sum had been more than John had supposed, and with this Dick erected a beautiful marble monument over John's grave, and on it was inscribed, below John's name and the date of his birth and death:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

In a search made of the home of Robert Craig, a recluse, who died in Bedford, Ind., large quantities of gold, silver and bills of various denominations were found. Practically everywhere the searchers looked they found money, gold pieces of the coinage of fifty years ago and "shln plasters" being found in old clothes. More than \$1,200 of good United States money was in the collection and was deposited in the bank here by Calvin Armstrong, the man's son-in-law. Although not yet through with the search, more than \$2,000 of foreign coins and bank notes of the issue of war times has been found.

The career of a bareback rider with a circus is limited to about ten years. It is short not so much because these men and women lose their agility, but because they lose their nerve. The tension and application is so strained and marked that it is only a few riders who are able to perform their startling feats more than a decade. Recklessness and daring die when youth ripens into age, and as all riders, as a rule, marry young, added responsibilities, coupled with a lively sense of danger, cause them to retire or else seek some less strenuous life. These riders are well paid, the majority of them commanding from \$150 to \$250 a week.

MISER DANCER'S GHOST

By John Sherman

"Whose fine old mansion is that, Dal, through the trees yonder?"

"That! Why, you certainly know the story of that house, versed in ghost lore as you are."

"No, I don't."

"Old Timothy Dancer—Dancing Tim the Miser—as we used to call him, lived there for many years, and they say that his ghost still haunts the place."

"Nonsense, Dal, you certainly don't believe any such rubbish?"

"Rubbish or not, strange sights and sounds are seen and heard there nearly every stormy night."

"The old thing, I suppose, raw head and bleached bones, sheeted specters with clanking chains, making night hideous; blue lights dancing about, ghostly crews roystering, etc."

"No—no, Wolf, nothing of the sort. And yet you wouldn't want to stay all night in the place, I'll warrant."

"It is too fine a house to go to waste. How did he happen to get it, anyhow? No miser would build such a castle as that. He'd live in a hovel first."

"It was left to him. After he died it was sold for taxes, but nobody will live in it, and it's going to ruin."

"What's the rent?"

"One hundred dollars—worth five."

"I'm going to rent it."

"You are mad."

"And you are going to spend the first night with me. No apologies, Dal; I can accommodate you just as well as not. And after we have laid that ghost I'll marry Fanny and we'll all live there as nice as you please."

"I beg to decline."

"I won't accept; come down now and see the landlord."

Wolferd Raymond, or Wolf, as he was generally called, was spending a few weeks of his vacation with his friend, Dal Rawlins, at Tarrytown, and their conversation reported above took place on the morning of the second day in town.

He had just graduated from college, and was taking a rest preparatory to entering upon his profession, that of the law. He was a bold, daring fellow and just the one to set all traditions at naught and do exactly as he pleased.

Dal was his familiar spirit, but generally followed Wolf's lead, although occasionally he could invent some startling scheme of his own for having a "racket," as he expressed it in the slang of the day.

It was soon rumored through the town that Wolf had leased the miser's house for three months, with the privilege of renewing at the same rate, or discontinuing, as he chose, at the end of that time.

His act was looked upon as foolhardy, and not a few predicted that no good would come of living in a haunted house, and many were willing to wager that if he was not killed the first night he would never remain in it a second one.

Wolf, assisted by Dal, laid in a supply of provisions, both solid and fluid, got a supply of fuel, for the night was cool, put in three or four comfortable lounges and easy chairs, and prepared to make a night of it.

The incredulous ones of the village were invited to stay up with the young men, and half a dozen accepted the invitation, not without fear and trembling.

Behold, then, at ten o'clock, the night after the lease was signed, a party of eight young men seated in a large, well-lighted, well-warmed comfortable-looking room, telling funny stories, singing songs, and evidently enjoying themselves immensely.

Without, a storm had arisen and the wind moaned dismally through the trees while the big rain drops beat against the windows. The thick, heavy curtains were drawn, but occasionally a flash of lightning, more vivid than the rest, would illumine the heavens and penetrate even to the brilliantly-lighted room.

It was soon after eleven o'clock and the storm had greatly increased in violence. There had been a long, hot, dry spell, and it seemed as if the reaction had come, and that the parched earth, crying for rain, was to be visited with a deluge.

"I don't mean to sit up all the night, ghost or no ghost!" said Wolf, "and I think I shall turn in;" and at the same time stretching out upon a lounge before the wood fire which

snapped and roared in the huge fireplace, as merrily as ever a fire shone in the good old days of the Puritans.

"Pour me out a fresh glass of that cider, Dal, and I'll give old Dancer a rousing toast."

"No—no, you must not!" broke from the lips of all.

Wolf arose, went to the sideboard, poured out a brimming glass of the amber liquid, and holding it up so that the lam-bent light shone all through it, exclaimed, in a loud, clear voice:

"Here's to the health of Miser Tim!

In cider, foaming to the brim;

If he won't come to drink with us,

May he in hot brimstone swim!"

At the last word Wolf put the glass to his lips, but before he could taste one drop of its contents, the most awful burst of thunder that was ever heard sounded in their ears, accompanied by a blinding flash of living fire, and a gust of wind that broke in a dozen panes of glass, tore down the curtains, and sent them flapping and fluttering in the maddest kind of way.

At the same time the lights were all extinguished, and the rain, pouring down the chimney and into the window, put out the fire most effectually.

A second peal followed, accompanied by a series of most awful shrieks.

A door was burst open, and there on the threshold stood a grinning skeleton, holding up one hand in warning.

The six village boys gave but one glance at the apparition, and bolted for the other door, losing no time in getting into the outer air, and making the best possible use of their legs in carrying them to their homes, where they told the most marvellous tales of what they had seen.

Wolf made a dash at the specter in the doorway, but it vanished, leaving in its place a thick blue smoke which was almost palpable.

"Light the lantern, Dal; I'm going to see this affair out."

At this minute a noise like the rattling of money was heard, and a shrill, unnatural voice shrieked:

"Ha—ha! my yellow darlings; they won't find you—ha-ha! no—no!"

Then from the still open door from which the skeleton had appeared there floated a reddish mist, growing brighter and still brighter every moment. It expanded until it filled the room, and as it spread and glided in and about everything a strange, drowsy feeling seemed to come over the two boys.

The most delicate perfume was perceived, and strains of soft music, and then there came floating into the room the airy outlines of a beautiful female figure, clothed in loose garments, which concealed yet revealed all the charms of a figure the most sylph-like that Wolf had ever beheld.

"Begone, mortals!" said the seraph.

Wolf was surprised, but felt confident that some trick was being played upon him, and he attempted to seize the creature in the room. The least movement was painful, and he felt an increase of the drowsy feeling that had already come over him.

"Dal, hurry up, light the lamp."

"The matches won't burn, and the flame goes right out when I do manage to get one."

"Let us get out of this room, at all events," cried Wolf, with an effort. "I'll close the phantoms out first," and he shut the door where the spirits had appeared.

The fairy form at once vanished and a most dismal groaning, howling and shrieking was heard all over the house. Angry voices as if of men in dispute, drunken shouts, demoniac yells and fiendish laughter were commingled in fierce discord, and one might well shudder at it.

"Hurry, Dal, hurry, there's something poisonous in the air, and all the windows have been strangely closed. Quick, it's death to stay here," and seizing Dal by one hand and the lantern by the other, he dragged his companion out of the room and down the broad staircase.

At the bottom they went into a spacious room, almost entirely devoid of furniture, and lit the lantern.

The apartment was low ceiled, and had been very elegantly fitted up; but the plaster had fallen from the ceiling and walls, the windows were roughly boarded up, and the bare floor was dirty and neglected, the boards being cracked and sprung out of place in spots.

"Look out, Dal," said Wolf, suddenly, "there's a hole there. You'll fall into it."

The boys advanced to the center of the room, Wolf holding the lantern. The boards had been taken up from a part of

the floor, and there at the bottom of a large oblong hole was a gigantic coffin which seemed to rise slowly toward them.

It was thickly studded with nails, and each separate nail seemed to glow with phosphoric light, while a strong mephitic odor was emitted from the coffin itself.

The blood of the boys froze in their veins, as turning suddenly at a slight noise, they beheld standing in the doorway through which they had just entered, the grinning skeleton of the room above, holding in his bony hands a bag of gold.

"Who are you, spirit?" said Wolf, with faltering lips, but a determination to see the end of the business.

"Miser Dancer's ghost!" said the figure, in a sepulchral tone.

"What do you want?"

"To get into my coffin."

"Let him get into it, Wolf, for heaven's sake; it's big enough, at all events," said Dal, stepping up to Wolf.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed the skeleton, approaching with long strides and stretching out his fleshless hands. "It is big enough, and to-night I will have two nice, warm boys to share my bed and keep me comfortable."

The hideous creature, with flaming eyes and ghastly grin came on rapidly and silently with arms outstretched as if to seize the boys in its deadly grip.

There was no escape. The skeleton was before and the open grave behind.

Wolf had provided himself with a revolver before entering the house, but until this moment he had forgotten it. Suddenly recollecting it, he quickly drew it from his hip pocket and shouted:

"Keep back, you awful thing, or I'll blow the top of your head off, ghost or goblin!"

The thing advanced quickly, and struck the lantern from the boy's hand.

There was a quick click, a whip-like report, a flash of flame and a puff of smoke, then the heavy thud of a falling body.

"Hurrah, Dal, I've fixed him!"

Wolf stooped to pick up the lantern, when suddenly the lid of the coffin flew open like two doors, and a white robed figure jumped out upon the floor and seized Dal.

The boy had no weapons except his fists, but he used these with such vigor that his opponent called lustily for help in a most thoroughly human voice, and in an instant, half a dozen goblins or men, it was hard to tell which they were, sprang from the coffin and rushed at the boys.

"Quick, Wolf, to the tower; it's our only safe place now!" shouted Dal, seizing Wolf, and hurrying him out of the room and up the stairs.

The phantoms made a rush for them, but Wolf, pausing a moment on the landing above, fired the remaining charges of his revolver into the crowd, and heard many an answering groan.

Dal ran swiftly up two more flights of stairs, and at last entered an octagonal room at the top of the house.

"This is the old tower," he said. "They used to use it as an alarm tower long ago, and I guess the bell is in good condition yet."

"Give me something to close the door, Dal, I hear them coming."

"Here's a heavy bar, made for the purpose."

"That's immense! there, that will keep 'em out for a while. Ring your old bell, if you can. Do you know what I think?"

"No; what is it?"

"That your Hudson River mystery is easily solved—that your ghosts are tramps, or burglars, or forgers, and that this is a pretty device of theirs to escape detection."

"But the skeleton and the sylph?"

"I don't know; perhaps a magic lantern had something to do with it. At any rate, I shot one most substantial demon. Ring, Dal—ring for your life! There's as many as twenty coming up the steps!"

Clang—clang—clang!

The iron-voiced bell rang out its cry for help upon the midnight air, startling the villagers from their slumbers.

Note after note clashed upon the ear, and the inhabitants, thoroughly alarmed, hurried in numbers to the spot.

"Come out of there, you young villains!" growled a harsh voice, in an interval of silence.

"Never, until help arrives!"

"It will be too late!" growled the voice, and some heavy object was dashed against the door, which, however, resisted all attacks upon it.

"I hear voices outside, Wolf, the neighbors are coming to our aid."

"Ring again, old fellow! those brutes on the stairs can't get

in. I'll hang the lantern out of the window and yell for help, too."

Wolf dashed open a window and swung the lantern to and fro. He could see a number of dancing lights down below, and he shouted loudly for the men to hurry.

"Shut up, young cub!" said a voice, and Wolf beheld a man on the parapet just outside the window.

He had got out from the hallway window and had crawled around, intending to take the boys by surprise, and open the door to his comrades.

He seized Wolf by the throat, and was about to lift him from his feet, when Dal, dropping the bell-rope, dealt him a stunning blow on the nose.

He reeled like a drunken man, lost his footing, and fell from the narrow parapet to the ground, fifty feet below.

The life was instantly dashed out of him, and he lay a corpse!

A new danger now threatened the boys. The thieves for such in reality were the tenants of the old house, baffled in their efforts to capture the boys and prevent an alarm, had set fire to the stairways, and the flames leaping over the dry, tinder-like wood, crackled and hissed and rushed with terrible speed towards the imprisoned boys.

They smelt the smoke and presently could feel the heat of the flames as they sped on, coming nearer and nearer.

"Help—help!" shouted Dal from the window, as the flames caught the walls of the tower, and shot out their tongues as if to devour the devoted boys.

Nearer and nearer come the villagers, and now a crowd is collected on the lawn outside, among them the constable.

There being strength in numbers, a dash is made for the front door, and the crowd burst in as a party of men prepare to rush out.

Pistol shots are fired, one or two men fall lifeless to the floor, and the constable suddenly coming face to face with a skeleton, tears the mask from its face.

"Aha! Big Pete, eh? I know you, my boy. This is a clever dodge of yours. Now I know who broke into the Watertown bank."

"Blame you and your gang!"

The robber makes a frantic effort to escape, but he is quickly seized and bound. Lights flash in every room and the secret of the spiritual visitors is soon explained.

But all this time the flames are surrounding the boys in the tower and threatening to cut off their escape. There is no way to reach them from below, and there are no ladders at hand down which they might clamber.

Their situation is one of imminent peril and hazard.

All at once Wolf has an idea.

"Give me the bell rope, Dal, I guess it will reach to the floor below. Here, cut it off, as high as you can reach."

This is done, and one end being fastened to the door bar, which is taken away and put across the window, the other is lowered and the boys climb down, one at a time.

Once on the landing beneath them, it is an easy matter to climb around the ornamental cornices, get upon the shutters and swing into the windows of the second story where there is no fire.

The flames have reached the spot where the boys were lately standing, and the tower is one mass of living, glowing fire, lighting the heavens like a beacon.

Then it falls with a crash and a shower of sparks is thrown far out upon the crowd.

The fire engines arrive and the flames are prevented from destroying the remaining portion of the house. Dal and Wolf are surrounded by crowds of admiring friends, and pressed to relate their experience.

Dal takes Wolf by the arm and carries him home with him, without vouchsafing a word to the gossip-loving multitude.

The next day Big Pete is arraigned and held to await the action of the grand jury. The other thieves are sent to Sing Sing. The house is searched and many articles of value are discovered.

Wolf claims his lease, and keeping the crowd out makes the necessary attentions, and by the time he enters upon the practice of the law, he has taken possession of a fine old mansion elegantly fitted up, the rent of which is almost nominal, and the mistress of which is Fanny Rawlins, the sister of his old chum Dal.


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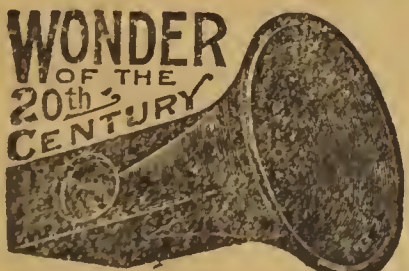
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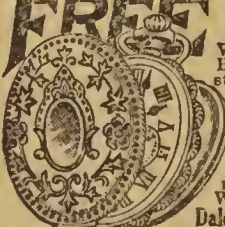
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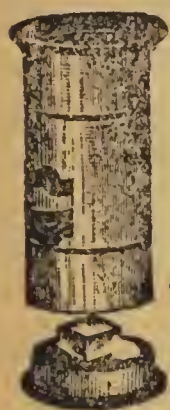

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